

Eagle Feather NEWS

FREE

Premier delivers long-awaited apology

Sixties Scoop survivors wept and smiled together following the apology from Premier Scott Moe.

(Photo by Jeanelle Mandes)



By Jeanelle Mandes
Of Eagle Feather News

A long-awaited apology to the survivors of the Sixties Scoop has finally been delivered by Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe.

Four years after former Premier Brad Wall said an apology will be issued, the historical moment happened. On Jan. 7 an apology was made to acknowledge the survivors and the impact the Sixties Scoop has made.

“It is difficult for most of us to comprehend what the individuals of the Sixties Scoop went through,” Moe acknowledged.

“I certainly can’t pretend to know. But I do know this, we failed the survivors we heard from in the sharing circles, and so many others. We failed their families. We failed their communities. We failed.

“On behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, I stand before you to apologize to say sorry,” said Moe.

“We are sorry for the pain and sadness you experienced. We are sorry for the loss of culture and language. To all those who lost contact with their family,

we are so sorry. There is nothing we can offer that will fully restore what you have lost.

“What we can offer is the solemn assurance that government policies have changed. And they continue to change.”

The apology took place at the Saskatchewan Legislative Building where hundreds of people gathered. Inside the Rotunda, there were two chairs covered with a blanket in the front row that were placed for the Sixties Scoop children who died before an apology was issued.

The chairs signified respect for the mothers and families whose children were taken and never lived to hear the apology.

Robert Doucette, a Sixties Scoop survivor and the former President of the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan (MN-S), said the apology was a step forward.

“We need to start somewhere. We could continue this never-ending dialogue about all of the things that we have faced but now we have engaged this province in this discussion,” Doucette said.

“Not only amongst First Nations and Métis but non-Aboriginals.

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*There is nothing we
can offer that will
fully restore what you
have lost.*

– Premier Scott Moe



Leaders accept apology, call for action

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“I think this apology sends a message across this province that we need to have that dialogue, we need to show empathy for each other and we need to do things in a different way. Without this apology and the acknowledgement of what has happened, we wouldn’t be engaging in a dialogue.”

“Is the work completed? No, it’s just beginning. You can rest assured that Sixties Scoop Indigenous Society and Sixties Scoop survivors across this province are not going to let this issue go away. There’s too much at stake.”

AFN National Chief Perry Bellegarde was not in attendance but acknowledged Premier Moe’s apology on social media.

“Premier Scott Moe formally apologized on behalf of the Saskatchewan government for its role

in the Sixties Scoop. While this is a welcome first step toward reconciliation, First Nations look forward to seeing concrete action from the gov-

First Nations look forward to seeing concrete action from the government of Saskatchewan that will help ensure First Nations children are protected and able to be successful in life.

– AFN National Chief Perry Bellegarde

ernment of Saskatchewan that will help ensure First Nations children are protected and able to be successful in life. We can’t let this happen again,”

Bellegarde stated in a Facebook post. The Federation of Sovereign In-

igenous Nations (FSIN) Executive was also not in attendance at the apology event but acknowledged the provincial apology through a media

release and a call for an immediate moratorium on provincial adoptions involving First Nations children.

“The apology is welcomed, however, there must be action along with these words. That means imme-

diately and serious change as this is First Nations jurisdiction” stated FSIN Chief Bobby Cameron in a media release.

“Our First Nations children are still being ripped away from their families, communities and culture. This needs to stop immediately. This apology is empty if it is not followed through with action.”

FSIN Vice Chief David Pratt added the apology is a good start but the government must end the apprehension of Indigenous children and immediately cease adoptions of First Nations children into non-First Nations homes.

“The current system continues to fail our children and we require immediate reforms that will place jurisdiction and accountability into our First Nations communities,” stated Chief Pratt.

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FSIN vows to continue fight for child welfare reform

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“This is what is desperately needed to begin the healing process and bring our families back together, while repairing the damage that has been done by the child welfare system.”

Chief Cameron added the need for child welfare reform legislation that places jurisdiction in First Nations hands has never been greater.

“This is our Treaty based position and Inherent Right to care for our children to ensure that we have safe, strong and healthy families,” he said.

“We will continue to fight for our children and our families and we won’t stop until there is a First Nations-led child welfare system that focuses on family support, language and culture. We look forward to asserting our First Nations control over our First Nations children.”

The Sixties Scoop refers to a period in Canadian history when Indigenous children



Sixties Scoop survivors and special dignitaries sat in the front during Premier Scott Moe’s apology.

(Photo by Jeanelle Mandes)

were removed from their families and their communities by child welfare serv-

ices. Thousands of First Nations, Métis and Inuit children were placed in non-Indigenous foster and adoptive homes in Saskatchewan.

Stacy Sutherland
Muskeg Lake Cree Nation
Treaty 6, Saskatchewan

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Bring it on 2019

Out with the old and in with the new. To be sure, 2018 was a grab bag of ups and downs.

Pipelines, protest camps (oil and for children), Supreme Court decisions (good and bad), apologies, growing graduation rates and working class, crystal meth scourges, success.

It is constant change. Act and react. Good and bad every single day.

The current state of affairs makes this column a little more challenging. The annual 2019 predictions of random things isn't easy. It is impossible to predict the next tragedy or court decision or next great program or success story, so I will stick to the usual topics of politics, sports and other things we can hope to be a bit more certain of.

First off, sports. The Flying Dust First Nation blows everyone away with their hospitality and organizational excellence when they host the Tony Cote First Nation Summer Games in July. Taking a wild guess here but Agency Chiefs Tribal Council comes out on top. Heard they are fast.

Several people will bring in ringers for the local golf tournament in order to win a TV.

The Kansas City Chiefs will win the Super Bowl. In the CFL, we see a massive quarterback shuffle in the West and the Riders wind up with a mediocre thrower who often gets injured. Regardless, the turmoil through the league allows the Riders to prevail and win the Grey Cup. You heard it here first.

The Saskatchewan Aboriginal Track and Field Championships in April have a record turnout for their 11th annual event. And Michael Linklater qualifies for the Team Canada 3X3 Basketball team for the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo.

Oh my lord, there is a federal election this year. What fun. Saskatchewan is very Conservative federally with only two NDP seats and one Liberal. The race to watch will be in the Desnethe-

Mississippi-Churchill River riding where NDP Incumbent Georgina Jolibois might be going up against Lac la Ronge Indian Band Chief Tammy Cook-Searson who has announced her intention to run for the candidacy.

This riding is a battleground and has gone to all three major political parties in the last 20 years. Chief Cook-Searson and Jolibois are extremely competent leaders. They both speak their language, Cree for Chief Cook-Searson and Dene for Jolibois.

Both have strong ties to their communities and the North. Both are traditional but can walk into boardrooms anywhere and command respect. These two leaders represent an awesome wave of educated, competent and determined Indigenous women



Dakota Ray Herbert (right) Tammy Cook-Searson (left) and Georgina Jolibois are three women to watch in 2018.

getting out the vote. Interesting to see who the Conservatives run. This will be a beauty. Overall, the Liberals will win again but with fewer seats. Unfortunately for the NDP, the absence of leader Jagmeet Singh from the national

conversation sees them take it on the chin and lose several seats.

Crazy Maxime Bernier and his nut bar party will draw away lots of conservative votes from Andrew Scheer and the Conservative Party allowing Justin Trudeau and the Liberals back in for a second term. Then, we are for sure going to see all those promises from the first election kick in right? Right?

Fewer Indigenous people will vote in the federal election, as well.

Provincially, the FSIN and MN-S will keep on trucking along. Rough politics for the FSIN around election time



in October, but that always seems to happen and it happens in every type of politics. It does seem that the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan has made progress with several signings with the federal government and the hiring of a few key staff. Peace, progress and good will to both of those organizations. We need them strong.

The breakout star of 2019 is going to be Dakota Ray Hebert. This comedian, actor and social media must-follow is writing the play for the Gordon Tootoosis Nikaniwan Theatre Circle of Voices program to debut in March and will also hit the TV on APTN's Crazy Like a Lynx as Co-Host alongside Don Kelly.

These are two of Indigenous Canadas funniest and the show will be a must watch. She is off the wall funny and overdue to hit the national stage.

You have to follow her on social media. She once posted a video of herself combing her arm pit hair. I almost died.

So, 2019 can bring it on. Things will happen good

and bad and hopefully it is full of leadership, laughter and change for the good.

Groom yourself and remember to vote in 2019.



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New year's celebrations were community events

People all over the world celebrate the arrival of a new year with joy, optimism and hope.

Some people party hard, kicking out the old year for a fresh start.

Others snuggle on the couch and watch the Netflix. Every year we celebrate the passing of the old and arrival of a new year on Dec. 31 and Jan. 1.

The calendar is called the Gregorian calendar and it has a long history. It was adopted by the Roman Catholic Church and named after Pope Gregory XIII in 1582.

The Pope people adopted it from early Romans who arbitrarily decided that their calendar year would begin on the first day of the first month because that's the day they inaugurated their elected officials (Consuls) and the date for collecting taxes.

Jan. 1 is an arbitrary date that has nothing to do with the natural order of the land or sky, or the beginning of a new life cycle. But it was the calendar of colonizing nations so it was imposed everywhere they went and settled.

Other peoples around the world acknowledge and celebrate the new year according to celestial observances or natural life cycles.

The traditional Mayan people of present-day Mexico and Guatemala have

calendars more accurate than the Gregorian.

Instead of 12 months, the Haab Mayan calendar has 18 months, each month with 20 days, followed by five days at the end of the year. The calendar follows the cycle of the Earth in relation to the sun, Moon, some planets a few star constellations, and their traditional New Year occurs in July.

From what I have heard, our new year begins in the spring when the natural cycle of life is renewed. Migratory birds return, hibernating animals and plants wake up, babies are born.

Some have said our new year occurs on or around the Spring Equinox, when the day and the night are equal. Many other cultures around the world celebrate the new year on or near the Spring Equinox—Babylonian, Persian, Indian (in India), Iranian, Pakistan, Albanian, Turkish and others, including the ancient Celts and even the ancient Romans.

The new year begins with new life.

New Year, as we know it today, was introduced by the fur traders almost 350 years ago. The English and the Scots

brought their celebrations and our ancestors embraced many of them.

Like all things new, our ancestors adopted and Indigenized the custom. They even came up with their own names for it. Cree people around here called it ocêhtow-kîsikaw which means "kissing each other day" commonly called "The Kissing Day."

They called it that because it was a custom of the HBC men to kiss every woman they encountered.

There are a few eye witness accounts of the celebration recorded from the late 1700s and 1800s. The people made a huge feast of their finest foods and gathered at the Fort where they ate, danced, sang and drank spirits well into the next day.

When the party got too rowdy, women and children returned to their homes only to be woken by the partyers going from lodge to lodge bearing small gifts and food. That part of the celebration was called "first footing" which the Scots believed brought good luck.

The Scottish New Year celebrations is called Hogmanay. They believed that

to ensure good luck for the household over the coming year, the first foot should be a dark male, and he should bring with him symbolic pieces of coal, shortbread, salt, black bun and a wee dram of whisky.

The Kissing Day custom continued until a few generations ago. Old people recall that when the missionaries moved onto reserves the celebration became more controlled. They gathered in the church to eat and celebrate, and all the women lined up in a tidy row and the men ever so politely kissed them on the cheek.

In some communities, people went from house to house using dog teams with the church bells ringing, firing guns into the sky. The next day they would go around from house to house again shaking hands with everyone. Then they spent the day visiting, playing games like soccer and football in the snow, having good times and good food together.

It was a community event. It brought light and fun to a cold and dark time of year. These days some of this HBC tradition continues but more and more communities are hosting Round Dances and having New Year's Day sweatlodges, celebrating the Gregorian New Year's NDN style.

Miyo-ocêhtowi kîsikamistik!



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Dawn's fearless predictions for 2019

When I was a kid, I'd always read the psychic predictions for the new year in the Star and Enquirer Magazines.

They were always helpful about giving you insight into the possibilities of the new year and also helped you to plan your schedule around that alien sighting that was going to happen in Arizona in late July.

As a former phone psychic, I've got a few predictions about the upcoming new year.

The federal election race will be incredibly ugly for two reasons: all of the commercials and adverts as the Conservatives try to prop up their pony, Andrew Scheer. I'm not sure I understand the appeal of the guy, to my eyes, he looks like rice pudding come to life.

The second reason is that Justin Trudeau's policies and decisions are rather inconsistent, like that boyfriend who tells you you're beautiful but still checks out other women's butts in front of you.

Trudeau is a rich kid who tries to tell us that he's a regular guy. He's an environmentalist who bought a pipeline. I'm all in favour of nationalized oil – hello, Norway! – but we cannot deny the damage that oil has done to northern Alberta, changing the landscape of that area from a dense boreal forest to a wasteland of tailings ponds and burnt trees.

Who wants that to happen to any other area? Trudeau's inconsistencies will give the Conservatives plenty of room to drive a wedge between him and his supporters.

Then there's Jagmeet Singh – who, like Casper the Friendly Ghost, has a pleasant demeanour and means well but is still, at the end of the day, invisible.

And unfortunately, good looks and positive chanting is not enough to propel the NDP into a leadership position.



I predict another Liberal government but the Conservatives will have a strong showing.

The #MeToo movement began in 2016 and has slowed since then. The predictable backlash from the knuckle-draggers of, "So what? I can't even do anything now?" I don't think anyone should be concerned unless you've been doing things that you shouldn't have been doing.

The MeToo movement may not get as much attention but it's still out there moving through social media and changing attitudes, especially among the younger generations.

Social media will continue with its confessional angle. But I predict that this year when people start ranting to the world about their exes, sisters-in-law, old landlords, etc., they will actually tag that person into the conversation so that we all can see the drama unfold in real time.

Or maybe people will just start making memes to describe all of their complex emotions.

I feel like I know some couples who communicate

entirely through passive aggressive social media posts and pictures. In the last couple of years, we've seen people's selfies go from being normal looking to looking like fairy-land puppies to looking like untouchable god-like images with zero flaws and pores.

I feel like all of this perfection is destined for a change. Maybe this the year people are gonna start taking selfies of themselves in less flattering lights, like under fluorescents or on the toilet. Just don't tag me in them.

Throughout the world, projects are underway to combat our reliance on fossil fuels. There are giant solar farms across India and China. Here in Canada, we just bought another pipeline. We are a big energy user with our challenging environment – ranging from biting cold in the winter (or at least it used to be) to sweltering summers. But we have to be more proactive because fossil fuel is limited – it's not like dinosaurs exist anymore (unless of course you count climate change deniers).

I predict that this summer there will be a showdown between the oil industry and activists and Indigenous people will be caught in the middle.

America will impeach Trump in the coming year. Yes, his mandate is running out but he currently has 17 different investigations against him. And yes, I know that it's corporate money that controls the government at this point. But those companies are made up of people. And some of them are Hispanic or black or gay or have an ounce of grace in their heart and cannot stand by as children die in cages.

As Martin Luther King Jr, not a psychic but certainly a prescient thinker, once predicted: "the arc of history is long, but it bends towards justice."

Stonechild new Deputy Chief in P.A.

By Jeanelle Mandes
Of Eagle Feather News

The former Prince Albert Police Service Inspector in charge of operations was recently promoted to one of the highest ranks as an officer.

Last month, Jason Stonechild from the Muscowpetung First Nation was appointed as the new Deputy Chief for the Prince Albert Police Service.

"I'm happy to represent both aspects of our community. I think I'm prepared to do that as best as I can," said Stonechild.

"I could represent both police and our First Nation population and I think that's essential. From all different walks of life, we have a segment of First Nations people that are celebrating the fact that a prominent First Nations man was made into this world. I take in a lot of pride and I'm happy for that."

Years ago, Stonechild went to school to become an accountant and he did his practicum with the police service for a summer back in 1993. When he completed his practicum, his career plans changed to become a police officer – a role that he has served for 25 years.

"I love the people that I work with," he said. "We have excellent men and women who sometimes are not accurately portrayed in the public or media because they always deal with tragedy. We really (embrace) community policing, connecting and building bridges. We see so much value in that."

Throughout his career, Stonechild has had a number of people that he looked up to including former Prince Albert Police Chief Troy Cooper who is now the Saskatoon Police Chief.

"He was a person I've always looked up to," he said. "I think he's an incredibly community-minded leader. He was missed when he left our organization and community because he is a great person."

Stonechild also embraced his strong family ties, noting he had a strict upbringing from his parents, but a very loving home.

"I was very blessed. They gave me everything I needed to succeed, not only myself, but my brother and sister (who are both) lawyers," said Stonechild.

"We are a product of our environment and we recognize that. We're very lucky. My wife and my children are essential to my success."

The Grand Chief of Prince Albert Grand Council Grand (PAGC) Brian Hardlotte applauded the great work that Stonechild has done to earn his promotion.

"On behalf of the Prince Albert Grand Council, I want to congratulate Jason Stonechild on his promotion to one of (Prince Albert Police Service's) highest ranks. For all of his years of service, he has demonstrated a proven track record for being a fair, thoughtful and progressive leader in policing matters," said Hardlotte in a media release.



PAGC Vice Chief Joseph Tsannie, PAPS Deputy Chief Jason Stonechild, PAGC Director of Justice Rick Sanderson, and PAGC Director of Urban Services Geoff Despina.

(Photo courtesy of Tina Pelletier/PAGC)

"This is a key appointment that will help to ensure that diversity and inclusivity drive key administrative and policy decisions in Prince Albert. For PAGC, having Indigenous representation at its highest levels

means more clear and balanced approaches to addressing complex socio-economic, cultural and racial issues facing our Indigenous people who are grossly over-represented in our overall justice system."



SHAUN SOONIAS



STEVE MCLELLAN



PAM LARSON

Business leaders see continued strength for Indigenous businesses

By Angela Hill
For Eagle Feather News

According to business experts in Saskatchewan, 2018 was a good year for Indigenous business growth and development in the province, with 2019 looking like it will continue the trend.

“We’ve seen lot of growth in partnerships. First Nations are looking expand and diversify,” said Shaun Soonias, executive director of the Saskatchewan First Nations Economic Development Network (SFNEDN).

He points to File Hills Qu’Appelle Developments making partnerships in construction business as an example.

The work of FQH Developments president and CEO Thomas Benjoe caught the eye of Steve McLellan, CEO of the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce. McLellan said young leaders like Benjoe and Cadmus Delorme, Chief of Cowessess First Nation, are standing out.

“People have stepped up in many significant ways and become leaders,” he said.

McLellan said positive relationship building is one of the most significant changes he saw in 2018 and he expects that will carry forward to 2019. In the past, some companies would engage in a quick in-an-out business approach with Indigenous communities and organizations, he said, adding people are now understanding that long-term relationships make better business sense.

“It’s how strong companies become strong companies,” he said. “Go to a table and stay at the table and have a conversation on how to move projects forward.”

The Clarence Campeau Development Fund (CCDF),

the Métis Financial Institution, sees 2019 as a year to continue projects, including the Métis Community Capacity Strategy. The five-year pilot project is working with nine Saskatchewan Métis communities to identify business opportunities and build capacity ensuring that the communities are able to capitalize on business opportunities, generate wealth, and provide employment opportunities for Métis people, wrote Pam Larson, the fund’s CEO.

Already, four communities have started or purchased businesses and three are working on potential opportunities. One of the 2019 goals is to have all the communities in business by the end of the year.

In 2018 the fund supported 48 businesses with \$7.5 million, which created 335 jobs, Larson said.

“We’ve seen a huge increase over the past two years and we are hoping the trend continues,” she said.

Among the CCDF focuses for 2019 is taking advantages of growth in the tech sector and, following the 2018 announcement of the federal governments Women Entrepreneurship Strategy providing increased services to women.

“We’re going to focus on helping more women get into business,” Larson said.

She said that Indigenous procurement is a big topic right now for governments of all levels, as federal, provincial and municipal leaders want to work with Indigenous communities. The CCDF as well as Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce are creating programs to support this desire.

“The objective is to identify opportunities for broader inclusion within the supply chain and leverage the spend to benefit indigenous businesses,” wrote Larson in an email

about their work.

As he looks towards 2019, Soonias said he expects to see more examples of First Nations entering emerging sectors such as exploring private health care opportunities.

“I think that something that will be trending is a lot more First Nations looking at the green energy sector,” he said.

Soonias also predicts agriculture pursuits will be a growing trend, from traditional farming to cannabis and the production of hemp. Communities are starting to explore new agriculture techniques, such as vertical farming, agriculture and aquaculture.

“A lot more First Nations are starting to look at how we can take advantage of all the lands we have,” he said.

Another trend to watch for is an uptick in Indigenous tourism. Global tourism markets are looking to experience more about culture and Saskatchewan First Nations are numerous, Soonias said.

“I think there is a lot of opportunity for Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan to share our story and culture,” he said.

There is space for hunting and trapping industries within the tourism sector, said McLellan.

“The growth in 2019, this may not be the quite tipping year for Indigenous engagement in Saskatchewan and Indigenous business, but it’s getting us a lot closer,” he said.

“I think in 2019 there’s going to be intellectual growth, I think there will clearly be some business growth and all of that, let’s hope, it’s based upon the tenets of the Reconciliation Calls to Action and therefore a shared, sincere desire that we grow together.”

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Indigenous arts community looking forward to increased interest in 2018

By Angela Hill
For Eagle Feather News

Interest in Indigenous art is increasing. That's the message from David Garneau, a professor of visual arts at the University of Regina.

During an email interview with Eagle Feather News, Garneau called 2018 "another strong year for the Indigenous renaissance in visual art." He expects that trend to continue in 2019, with a particular focus on female Indigenous artists, curators and writers.

For Garneau, some of the 2018 highlights included exhibitions by female artists at the Art Gallery of Ontario, and Vancouver Art Gallery. Closer to home, Garneau wrote that the year opened with the Sioux Project at Regina's Mackenzie Art Gallery. Dana Claxton's multi-projection installation about Sioux art and community in Saskatchewan.

He called At the Centre of the World, Jimmie Durham's retrospective at the Remai Modern challenging. The show was in Saskatoon from March 25 to Aug. 5, 2018. He didn't see it at the Remai, rather viewing it in New York.



Jennifer Dawn Bishop is the Artistic Director of the Gordon Tootoosis Nîkânîwin Theatre.

ner," she said.

It's not a massive step, but there continues to be improvements to collaboration. Bishop said more theatre organizations and individuals want to work with GTNT than ever before.

"Moving forward I think definitely we'll see some more, for sure," she said, adding it is nice to see the desire to share diverse voices.

This coming year promises to bring strong art visually and in theatre, Bishop said. The GTNT 2018-19 season wraps up in June after two more shows, including Circle of Voices running March 7 to 14. Circle of Voices (COV) is a program that gives youth a chance to experience life in the theatre.

"It's going to be a really nice, exciting year. It's our new batch of COV and they're working with a fantastic local artist Dakota Ray Hebert, who is writing the story and working with the students. We are really excited for these guys," Bishop said.

Looking towards the 2019-20 season, the lineup announcement is expected in June.

"There is going to be a nice little variety of things. We always bring our A-game and I know they're going to be bringing up some cool shows at the Persephone, I won't give it away," she said. "I'm still working on tying them together with a beautiful theme."

Bishop wants to thank those who continue to support Indigenous theatre and looks to welcome new people in 2019.

"Just like everyone else we have our own stories; sit, laugh, cry with us. Share the good times with us."

Visual exhibitions coming to Saskatchewan in 2019 include The Writing on the Wall: Works of Dr. Joane Cardinal-Schubert RCA running Feb. 1 to Mar. 29 at Waunskewin in Saskatoon. The exhibition will include pieces of the artist's paintings, drawings, print-makings, collages and ceramics.

In Saskatchewan, Garneau said he is looking forward SakKijâjuk: Art and Craft from Nunatsiavut running from Feb. 14 to May 20 at Regina's Mackenzie Art Gallery.

Further afield, Garneau said there are a couple of exhibitions that continues a trend of mixing Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists together. He recom-

mends Soundings: An Exhibition in Five Parts at the art centre in Kingston, and Hexsa'am: to be Here Always, at the Belkin Art Gallery in Vancouver.

One of the most interesting trends in art that Garneau is watching into 2019 is how people are "taking traditional art practices – especially beading – and making cotemporary art."

It's about the art and not function. He gives Saskatoon's Ruth Cuthand as an example, how she uses beading to critique contaminated water.

"It is also exciting to see Indigenous people make waves in the fashion industry by introducing traditional styles and materials into contemporary haute couture," he wrote.



DAVID GARNEAU

"I was alternately moved and confused by it. Durham maintains he is Indigenous, but no tribe claims him," he said. "Depending on whether you think he is or is not markedly changes how you read many of the works."

Last year saw a continued building of milestones around interest in Indigenous theatre, said Jennifer Dawn Bishop, artistic director of the Gordon Tootoosis Nîkânîwin Theatre based in Saskatoon.

She said that in the past there was minimal interest in Indigenous stories and Indigenous storytelling in Saskatchewan, but that is changing.

"It's nice to see other companies are wanting to present and share our stories, in a good, respectful man-



Jon Scott
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NAIG preparations top the agenda for sports in 2019

**By NC Raine
For Eagle Feather News**

The year looks bright for Indigenous athletes and youth in Saskatchewan.

Many of the province's top athletes and coaches will spend the year focusing on training for the upcoming North American Indigenous Games (NAIG), taking place in Halifax in 2020.

Saskatchewan has a storied history with NAIG, finishing as overall champions in six of the ten editions of the games, and claiming the most overall medals, with almost 1900 total.

"We are pushing to be overall champions again," said Mike Tanton, Chef du Mission of NAIG Team Saskatchewan.



MIKE TANTON

coordinators a bit more time to select their teams to give them more practice time, which hopefully translates into us winning gold," said Tanton.

That push to gold is well underway, with coordinators already selected for all 16 sports. The steering committee is now in the process of selecting coaches and hopes to have all teams assembled and training camps under way by this fall.

Once athletes are selected, Team Saskatchewan will partner with the University of Saskatchewan to provide athletes with elite training.

"We'll be providing hands on training for our athletes, working with the university coaches to do on field or on court training in order to give them a bit of an inside edge. They'll also be working with (U of S) Huskies teams, functioning as role models. A combination of coaching and mentoring them to push them a bit," said Tanton.

In order to ensure the attending the games comes at little cost to the 500 athletes, coaches, and managers attending the games, Team Saskatchewan has a \$1.7 million fundraising goal. But the goals, said Tara Griffith with FHQ banner at the Jays home field in Toronto.

"The biggest goal is to see a number of the athletes that participate in the games go on to university as student-athletes. That's the gold medal right there. More athletes getting into the educational system, that's an overall win for our communities," said Tanton.

At the community level, young people

are also finding increased opportunities to participate in sports. File Hills Qu'Appelle (FHQ) Tribal Council is launching this fall the first high school youth basketball league in the Prairie Valley School District.

"A lot of students in this area don't get a lot of games or tournaments – maybe one a week. So, we came up with the idea of going off the (Blue Jays) Rookie League format to encourage more community involvement," said Tara Griffith, Sports and Recreation Coordinator for FHQ, who said the eight-team league will begin in February.

FHQ will also be participating this April for the second year of the Blue Jays Care Foundation Rookie League – a baseball league designed to provide underserved communities with the chance to learn skills, plays sports, and engage with role models.

"It's exciting, because we're looking to make it bigger and better this year, with a longer season and more people involved," said Griffith.

"A lot of kids who weren't in the rookie league last year heard about it and now want to play, so we'll probably have 100 more kids this year."

"Seeing the impact it had on them (last year) was amazing. For some, they were really brought out of their shell. For others, it was really special to be able to play in front of their families," said Griffith.

Griffith also plans to create a winter ski and snowboard program for youth, many of whom do not have the opportunity to experience these types of activities. But Griffith says these sports programs aren't about competition, it's about enriching the lives of young people.

"It covers the whole medicine wheel – the physical, the emotion, and the spiritual," said Griffith. "The connection to Mother Earth and helping these kids understand where they come from. In the long run it's creating confidence in them that they might not have had before."

Tanton and Team Saskatchewan also echo this approach to nourishing potential of sports. He said they are trying to use NAIG 2020 as a platform to build capacity to help teach and develop young minds, as well as repair the past.

"It speaks to the health of the community when you can see young people engaged in sport and in school," said



Eager ball players hit the field for the Blue Jays Rookie League.

Tanton.

"The more opportunities for our young people, the sooner we'll get around to breaking the cycle of what

happened in residential schools and the sixties scoop. We have to find ways to break those cycles and lift young people up to these positive environments."



"I can see the long-term benefits of having an education and getting your career on track earlier rather than later."

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Tiffany Newby-Vermette has been clean from crystal meth for almost 13 years and wants to bring hope that change is possible. (Photo submitted)

Former meth addict finding new life in Crystal Clear support group

By Jeanelle Mandes
Of Eagle Feather News

A former crystal meth addict aims to bring hope to others, maintaining that change is possible.

Tiffany Newby-Vermette has been clean for almost 13 years. Being arrested for armed robbery and looking at jail time was the rock-bottom point for Newby-Vermette and her signal that it was time to leave this lifestyle.

Quitting the drug cold turkey was extremely hard for her but she did it to change her life for the better.

"My mom got sick with cancer and we knew she was going to die. I burdened her for so long that I didn't want to burden her any longer," she said.

"I slept lots and went into a deep depression. I was about 19 or 20 when I quit."

Newby-Vermette was a crystal meth user for five years and was first introduced to it to try escape her own issues.

"When I first tried it, it was the best feeling. You feel so happy and good feelings are rushing through your body," she said.

But after that, she had chased that feeling of that first high and was quickly addicted to the powerful drug. Five years of her life crumbling, she needed a way out. It was the hardest transition for her to make but is a decision that carries no regrets.

"Since then, I have all my ambition back," she said. "When I got clean, the first person I called was my old drug

counsellor from high school. He actually asked me to go around to talk to students at high schools. I started doing that. Now it's a snowballed effect. I have all these people who want me to come (share) my story."

Newby-Vermette joined the newly formed Crystal Clear support group in Regina this past November but was hesitant at first.

"I don't know if it was my pride that I didn't want to go to those kinds of meetings, it wasn't my thing," she said.

"But I wanted to get involved so I decided that I'd go to a meeting and I'm so happy I went.

"It's a real good support group. I can't stop talking about it."

Newby-Vermette is currently a manager at KFC in Regina and is also enrolled for school to study nursing.

She encourages others who are struggling with a crystal meth addiction to seek support groups after you admit that you have a problem.

"Get the help that you need and move on with your life from there," she said.

She also hopes people can educate themselves on the addiction to crystal meth to break to stigma so others can understand.

"What people don't understand, it's a sickness, they look down on the person right away," she said.

"There's usually a reason people turn to drugs. There's something they are trying to numb so it's better to understand that on why people use."

North Country Massage and Medi Spa provides state-of-the-art service to PA

By Naomi Zurevinski

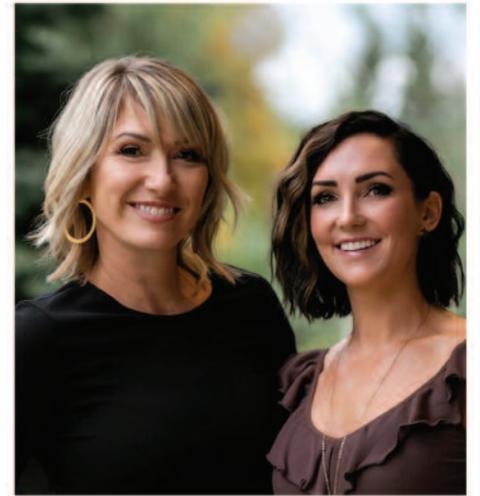
Bernadette Lavoie always knew she was an entrepreneur. After travelling and working abroad, she decided to come back to her roots in Saskatchewan, having grown up 30 minutes outside Prince Albert on a grain farm. In 2005, she opened North Country Massage and Medi Spa in PA, and hasn't looked back since.

North Country has become the leading provider of cosmetic injectables, laser treatments and skin and spa treatments in the PA area. In 2010, Lavoie was interested in expanding the business and applied to the Business Plan and Business Development programs through the Clarence Campeau Development Fund, for the purchase of two crucial pieces of medical equipment.

"I bought a piece of laser medical equipment for the purpose of laser hair removal, and I also bought an IPL for the purpose of skin rejuvenation, to expand some of the services we offer. There wasn't really anything like that in PA," Lavoie said. "Those two pieces of equipment that [the CCDF] helped me purchase changed my life."



The CCDF is an organization established in 1997 by the Saskatchewan government to assist with the economic and development activities of Métis people in the province. Increasing the employment rates among Métis people has numerous socioeconomic benefits, including improved self-esteem and



health and wellness of individuals and families. Lavoie feels that accessing the CCDF's funding helped with her level of confidence in her business.

"I was a single mom and I didn't have a lot of money or collateral, but [the CCDF] saw the potential in me as an entrepreneur. I had gone to the bank and they said I was just a small business, and I said, 'Well yeah, I'm a small business, but small businesses become big businesses.' But the CCDF gave me a lot of confidence, and it's provided me with a much better life than I had before as a single mom."

The purchase of the equipment gave Lavoie the opportunity to expand, and in 2015 she took on business partner Lindsey Rask, who helped contribute to North Country's growth. Through her business, she has also been able to pay it forward by employing many Aboriginal people.

"Lindsey and I are Métis and probably 90 percent of our staff are Aboriginal, so I really feel like we are giving back," Lavoie said. "We provide training for them to expand their careers, so we feel like we are giving back in that way."

Overall, for Lavoie, the best part of operating North Country is seeing how clients feel when they leave.

"I love the fact that clients always leave happy. This is a place they come to for pampering - that's the thing I love about spas. I like the transformation we can give people with their skin and body, and improve their well-being and their perception of themselves. It is very rewarding.

For information on North Country Massage and Medi Spa, visit www.northcountrymedispa.com.

For more information on the CCDF, visit www.clarencecampeau.com.

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Serving Saskatchewan's Métis

Professor predicts a year of unpredictable volatility

**By NC Raine
For Eagle Feather News**

A new year means new question marks for climate and resources in Saskatchewan.

The recent effects of climate change in Saskatchewan have been significant, with floods, droughts, extreme weather events and forest fires, often causing the most devastating damage to northern communities and land owners. Experts say trends in weather point toward another volatile year in 2019.

“The only thing we can say with a degree of certainty is that it’s going to be unpredictable and highly volatile. We don’t know if we’re going to get a drought year or flood year,” said Greg Poelzer, Professor at the University of Saskatchewan’s (U of S) School of Environment and Sustainability.

The greatest climatic threat in Saskatchewan, said Poelzer, is forest fires in the North. Last year was particularly dry in the prairies, where just over half the average amount of rain fell between April and August. And nearly a third of northern Saskatchewan had to be evacuated due to forest fires.



“I expect a bad forest fire year. We might not get it, but on average we’re going to see increasing numbers and severity of forest fires. That’s our largest climatic threat,” said Poelzer.



“We’ve had grass fires last year, which can be devastating for agriculture crops and livestock.”

In the last five years, Saskatchewan and Western Canada has experienced the most extreme floods and droughts in its recorded history. Research indicates that minimum temperatures in winter have gone up four to five degrees, with average annual temperatures up two to three degrees. Winters are now as much as two months shorter than they were in the 1970s, and yield less snowpack.

“Specifically, in Saskatchewan, what we’re worried about is planting crops. The last few years have been pretty dry, but we try to rely on that snowpack that accumulates over the winter and melts in the summer, helping grow our crops,” said Colin Laroque, Professor at the U of S College of Agriculture and Bioresources.

“But when it’s really warm, like it has been recently, you tend to lose all your snowpack. It’s quite terrible when you get to June or July because the moisture isn’t there to replenish your systems.”

This could lead to poor crops, drought, and low water levels, said Laroque.

“One year we might get incredibly high snowpacks and the next, really low, like we are experiencing right now. What it does is present a feast or famine type idea – or if you want to put in in climate-talk – drought or floods,” he said. “It gets so warm so quick at the wrong time, as all the waters just flood across the service.”

The small snow packs and warmer temperatures have serious implications for many northern First Nations and communities, who depend on ice-roads to transport necessary supplies. “

“The time you used to have to carry up gas, wood, and supplies to these remote communities has gone from months to short weeks,” said Laroque.

Earlier in 2018, Saskatchewan released their ‘Prairie Resilience’ climate strategy, including 25 measures to help monitor and enhance resilience to climate change.

First Nations and other northern communities, vulnerable to the unpredictable climate changes, do have measures they can take to increase security, experts say.

“We have to start building significant firebreaks around communities with critical assets,” said Poelzer. “This is where we have to work close in partnership with provincial and federal government to do firebreaks around those communities. We almost have to expect the worst to happen every summer. So, we should be getting First Nations more engaged into that kind of fire management.”

And due to these rapid and unpredictable changes in weather, land, water and vegetation is under increased pressure, posing challenges to farmer and others who rely on natural resources. Laroque said that it’s important under these circumstances to remain flexible.

“Diversifying is important for First Nations. If one thing isn’t growing, perhaps another is. But it’s difficult because we find ourselves at the whim of Mother Nature. It’s harder to predict and understand what’s happening,” said Laroque.

“We have to listen to the land as best possible and be ready to adapt and diversify.”



Professor Colin Laroque believes that in 2019 crops will suffer from an early drought.



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Going willingly, with humility, to face the demons

**By Louise Halfe
For Eagle Feather News**

(Part Two of a two-part article)

We need the instinct of the wolf, to learn to track our behaviors, follow the scent of goodwill and sing in celebration.

The buffalo faces and walks into the storm. We, too, must face and walk into our turmoil. But we need guides: Elders, teachers, counselors and therapists. We need them to validate and witness the stories that we've hoarded in our bodies and in our souls.

No doubt we are already a mangled mess, twisted inside out by our wounding. Just as a stone is overturned, we need to turn these stories inside out to find the goodness we once possessed and knew. In the process we will squirm, rage and weep.

But it is only through breaking the laws of "the don'ts" that we reveal our truths and step forward. These stories and the Grandfathers/mothers morals and values that I mentioned earlier are our medicines. They will reveal themselves in our changed behavior.

Sometimes there is so little self-respect to draw from that it's difficult to go to that dark wilderness and trust someone with our deepest secrets. When and if it is possible, one must go willingly, with humility, and face the demons. In the act of reclaiming our full-potential we lift the gift of choice. In essence, we learn to bless ourselves.

In the winter, the bear goes into hibernation and lives off its fat. We, too, have that innate wisdom. It is what drives us forward in the first place, when we are sick and tired of being sick and tired. We must go into that dark healing place where light and lightness are offered.

There is no way around that deep laceration where our ulcerated souls have been subjected to sexual, physical, emotional and spiritual violence. Change can be excruciating. But if healing is what you are after you must do your research.

Find a good counsellor, psychiatrist, psychologist, or someone who has the skills to help you medicine yourself. Educate yourself, read, read, read and read. Open your mind and heart. Go on an adventure of exploration. Ask questions of others. How did you do it? What was in your medicine bundle of knowledge to help you be successful?

Be open to your dreams. Nightmares want to wake up your conscious self. At times dreams will poke fun at you and laugh. Other times they are prophetic, they will tell you an event will occur. They will help you problem-solve. They are in essence our guardians.

When I was growing up, my par-

ents, my siblings and I would head to the sugar beet fields in Southern Alberta. We'd hoe row upon row, acres and acres of sugar beets. This gave us a sense of responsibility and satisfaction. It certainly gave me a sense of pride.

I recently heard Chief Tammy Cook talk about her parents and their ability to butcher a moose and tan the hide to completion. The work ethic was instilled in her as well as self-respect, responsibility and self-reliance.

We need and want to follow our aspirations and achieve our goals. We need purpose.

*We are a feeling people,
which is a good thing.
However, we also need to
think before we act and
before we talk.*

We all need to work at something. The late John Tootoosis told his sons not to touch social assistance or he'd disown them. He wanted them to be totally self-governing. When I left residential school, I was aimless and rootless. The home and family I once knew had eroded as the years of residential school ate away our childhoods and teen years.

It was difficult to dream. When you've been taught that you are a nothing, what is the remote chance of success? There was no parental guidance. I had been "controlled" for so long that the ability of self-determination had been undermined.

My first psychiatrist dismissed me for reasons I believe were racist. This was in the early seventies and attitudes toward Aboriginal people were poor.

In the late seventies I again took a huge plunge and entered therapy with a different psychiatrist. After therapy we became lifelong friends, until his death.

I was a student and co-facilitator at Nechi Institute where I learned about addictions, intergenerational trauma and the residential school experience. I re-entered therapy after having my eyes and heart re-opened.

I had a wonderful psychologist who also became a lifelong friend. At the same time, I also embarked on my cultural and spiritual re-orientation with my Elders. I needed to reclaim my lost self.

We are a resilient people and though we are scarred we have the capacity to continue living. But what is it we need from our neighbors, the settlers, as allies?

In therapy I needed to be heard. I needed compassion, kindness and re-

spect. And I needed tools. In life I want fair treatment without animosity, stigma and racism.

Racism is both personal and systemic, it has the tendency to be justified and is often entrenched.

Our friends need to examine "white privilege" and own their racism. We all have histories. For years Aboriginal people learned about the colonial history. A fair exchange of a different history is long overdue.

We all need to understand treaty. The process of societal change needs to be a lifelong endeavor. I do not want to be disempowered by the savior mentality. I don't

want to encounter "talking heads", but human beings with integrity.

We need honest and open dialogue. Conflict doesn't necessarily mean a lifetime of anger and grudges. In fact, it can open doors to different ways of perceiving. I don't want to be a token "Indian" as I have often found my-

self in the past.

Our voices need to be respected and validated. We believe in wahkohtowin-relationship. And relationship needs and wants



all the morals and values we profess to live by. I don't want to be patronized, I need to be treated as an equal with intelligence. In many respects we all need and want emotional intelligence that will nurture mental and spiritual intelligence.

Some journeys are not easy. The journey between the head and the heart is the most courageous one. We are a feeling people, which is a good thing. However, we also need to think before we act and before we talk.

The Elders teach us peyahtik – go slowly, carefully, with kindness and respect. Be gentle with yourself.

All my Relations. Ahow

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Let's push back against the male hierarchy

Let's start this new year off with dismantling patriarchy.

There is a lot of talk about empowering women and especially our Indigenous women, but let's stop the talk and take action in our own lives.

I want to first acknowledge that this comes from personal experience as a single mother, also pursuing an education. There are barriers set in place that make it harder for women to thrive and succeed in this capitalistic, colonial society that is founded on a hierarchy where men have always been at the top.

There is something I have personally noticed and that is women are shamed and demonized for some reason in this society for being single moms, whereas single dads are held on a pedestal and admired for spending or doing the bare minimum to be in their children's lives.

Where women are expected to be loving caregivers at all times, to be considered a "responsible parent", men are only expected to show up from time to time in order to be deemed good fathers.

I understand there are also single dads out there where the mother is absent and I praise those men who do step up for their kids or for other people's kids and are amazing stepdads.

Just let the conversation be for women, by women. It has taken a long time for women to even have a voice and be taken seriously. Women were literally burned at the stake for being outspoken and intelligent and were considered property of either their husband or father.

So why not let 2019 be about empowering our women.

There is big talk about honoring women. Well, let's honor our women, then. Let us hold all of our mothers up, let's realize they need encouragement, support, love and respect the most. Because the future, which is the children, rests in their hands.

Single mothers have a hard enough time trying to raise their kids on their own without nearly every person they cross judging them. It's hard to be in a world where single moms are constantly looked at like there is something wrong with them or slut shamed just because the person they had children with has their own issues and did not or would not take responsibility for their children.

I have experienced this on a regular

basis and it is brutal. People can say they do not internalize these stereotypes they have against single mothers, but if you cannot acknowledge or address something there will never be a solution or change to that problem.

Let's get to the roots of these issues so we can respect each other. Let's do our best to not enable men who do not contribute to their children's lives.

Let's put people in check because if we do not, they will never see anything wrong in their actions.

Society has normalized the absent father, while a mother, and specifically single mothers are being peed on, pooped on, puked on all while keeping the house in order and going to school, maintaining a job and career to provide for their children.

Whatever it is, moms are sacrificing for their children and not even being held to the same standard as a man.

If we actually want to help one another, have healthy and thriving communities, we need to make sure we put ourselves in check as well. We need to let go of things do not help us grow and quit

shaming and blaming one another.

There is a hierarchy in society I see it and feel every day as a woman who is in law school and an Indigenous woman at that. I've been told to my face that as a single Indigenous mother that my dreams are "unrealistic" or to get some new dreams by those who think I need to slow down or just focus on being a mom.

As if my dreams and motherhood could not co-exist.

The point is we can be whoever we want to be and we are not defined by the cookie cutters society tries to make us fit into. We are defined by our unique, resilient, soul that we are born with and carry with us every day.

So, let's celebrate our uniqueness, let's honor and truly empower our women, our mothers, and our life givers. No one is perfect, no one's mom is perfect but they are doing the best they can with what they know.

For me, I have been through some near-death accidents that have woken me up and I have had to live through some hard lessons to understand tomorrow is never promised.

I would rather spend time that I have with my children today and not waste it on people who choose to the look the other way.



Environmental engineer committed to remediating mine sites

By NC Raine
For Eagle Feather News

Thomas Lavergne works to mitigate an environmental issue that few even realize exists.

Scattered across Northern Saskatchewan are several abandoned uranium sites posing risks to both human health and the environment. As part of Saskatchewan Research Council's (SRC) Project CLEANS, Lavergne, an Associate Environmental En-

gineer-in-Training, helps to improve environmental conditions at these sites so they may be used by residents as a resource for trapping, hunting, and fishing.

For his work in making Northern Saskatchewan a cleaner, safer place, Lavergne, from St. Louis, Sask., was recently named one of Corporate Knights Top 30 Under 30 in Sustainability – a list of young Canadians pushing for a more sustainable world.

"I find it really rewarding to go back and repair these sites where damage was done," Lavergne said.

"There's a lot of sites up north needing remediation. Hopefully we can help the industry change so that we don't have to go back and clean sites – they'll continually do it as they're working."

Lavergne hadn't always set out to help northern communities. Five years out of high school, he was living in Toronto when he learned of old sites being remediated, and began to research how he might be part of these sort of projects.

"When I came across environment engineering, I didn't even know what it was, or that it was an option," he said.

A handful of years later, Lavergne, a University of Saskatchewan graduate, is part of a 37-site, multi-year, multi-million-dollar project.

Two of the largest sites, Gunnar Uranium Mine and Mill, and Lorado Uranium Mill, Lavergne explained, contained threats to public safety, such as exposed mine openings or contaminants flowing to water bodies, which can affect resident trap lines, fishers, and hunters.

"Our team is really involved with community engagement, we get the communities involved in what we're doing up there. They have local knowledge and the right to be consulted into the work that's being done," said Lavergne.

"We try to have an understanding from the local communities of the significance of each particular site."

In addition to his work with Project CLEANS, Lavergne has led the development of Student Environmental Monitoring Program, which gives young adults living in remote locations hands on experience in science.

"We identified that there's not a lot of opportunities for young people from up north to get exposed to or experience environmental related fields," said Lavergne.

The program has had 14 students in three years exposed to a broad range of environmental science as it relates to their remediation projects.

"It's been a really positive experience. At first the students are quite guarded, but by the end they really open up. We've had some students who, by the end of the week, were really excited and wanted to consider going into environmental science," he said.

"I'm not that far removed from where they are. I want to show them some of the things I wish I knew at the time."

When considering the distinction, he earned as one of Corporate Knights Top 30 Under 30 in Sustainability – one of only two people from Saskatchewan named on the list – Lavergne displays humility, a quality that likely led to his vocation of serving communities and the environment.

He said he has mixed feelings about the distinction because he's worked alongside so many other people who also deserve recognition. His priority, he said, is his work. "It's a team effort. To be singled out made me a little uncomfortable. But still, it was a very nice honour," he said.

"What I'm focused on now is the projects we're working on. I want to be part of making these 37 sites reach the point where nature can take over. Where the environmental conditional is good enough to allow us to feel comfortable to walk away."



THOMAS LAVERGNE



(L to R) Justina Sather Senior Operations Manager Gold Horse Casino, Lloydminster Mayor Gerald Aalbers, Colleen Young MLA Lloydminster, Chief Wayne Semaganis Little Pine First Nation, FSIN Chief Bobby Cameron, Zane Hansen CEO and President SIGA, Rick Gamble Border Tribal Council representative, Roger Anderson General Manager Gold Horse Casino. (Photo supplied by SIGA)

Gold Horse Casino in Lloydminster is SIGA's seventh

A shiny new SIGA casino recently opened up in Lloydminster.

An opening ceremony was held at the Gold Horse Casino in Lloydminster in December with a collaboration of partners that included the Border Tribal Council, the Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority (SIGA), and Little Pine First Nation holding a ribbon cutting and soft opening event to celebrate SIGA's newest entertainment destination.

Chief Reginald Bellerose, SIGA's Board Chair, spoke to the collaboration of key partners involved in making this casino a reality.

"On behalf of SIGA, we're thrilled to be opening our seventh entertainment des-

ignation in Saskatchewan, a consolidated effort between us and our key partners, the Border Tribal Council, Little Pine First Nation and the City of Lloydminster. This development is an exciting addition to Lloydminster, and one that will benefit our province's 74 First Nations and the local community," said Bellerose.

SIGA President and CEO Zane Hansen expanded upon what this newest property means for Lloydminster and area.

"This casino will have an immense impact in the local community and surrounding area, as do all SIGA casinos. Through our operations, we contribute to our local communities by creating jobs, helping drive tourism, supporting local

businesses and making a positive impact through community investment and volunteering," he said.

"To date, SIGA has invested more than \$200,000 in sponsorships in Lloydminster and area."

The Gold Horse Casino is an over 49,000 square foot, full-service casino and features a gaming floor with more than 250 of the latest slot machines, 18 electronic table games, and five live table games. The casino also brings a state-of-the-art event centre for live entertainment, banquets and meetings, a bar and grill, and a deli.

The land for the development is owned by Little Pine First Nation, which

was responsible for the site development. The facility landlord is Border Tribal Council, which leases the casino property to SIGA.

The Gold Horse Casino had its first full day of operations on Dec. 21, 2018 which opened at 9 a.m. The casino will be open 17 hours a day, Monday to Sunday from 9 a.m. to 3 a.m. (MST), and Thursday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 4 a.m.

Gold Horse Casino is located at 3910 41st Street in Lloydminster and joins SIGA's family of casinos, which includes Bear Claw Casino & Hotel, Dakota Dunes Casino, Gold Eagle Casino, Living Sky Casino, Northern Lights Casino, and Painted Hand Casino.

STC is gone; but the fight for transportation in Sask is on

By Sheri Benson

Member of Parliament for Saskatoon West

In Canada, people should be able to get where they need to go.

Geographical barriers and a widely-dispersed population should not prevent us from seeking creative solutions to ensure that everyone has access to public transportation.

In densely-populated urban centres like Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, residents are connected by subways, city bus networks, or streetcars. People have public transportation options to commute to work, get to medical appointments, or visit with friends and family.

Now, think of Saskatchewan with all our small towns and remote communities. I'm picturing places like Melfort, Maple Creek and La Loche, where sometimes great distances must be travelled to reach an essential service.

Regardless of whether you reside in La Loche or Toronto, you should be able to get where you need to go – it shouldn't matter if your doctor's office is six blocks away, or 600 kilometers away. Governments need to think outside the box to ensure people can access public transportation across Canada.

In Saskatchewan, 253 communities used to be connected by a provincial crown corporation that operated 25 public bus routes. It was called the Saskatchewan Transportation Company (STC) and it connected people

to friends and family, and to the services they need. It gave post-secondary students a chance to go home to visit family, seniors a way to get to their medical appointments, and persons fleeing domestic violence an invaluable lifeline.

It was the "subway" that got us where we needed to go until the tracks were ripped out two years ago.

The cancellation of the STC was the decision of a government pursuing austerity as the solution to its own fiscal mismanagement, taking public busses off Saskatchewan's roads and creating a harsh new reality for those who relied on the service.

The absence of public transportation is particularly noticeable in December, when people travel to visit their loved ones or look for an affordable way to send packages and parcels. An empty rocking chair by the fireplace conjures up feelings of melancholy for disconnected families this holiday season.

It's 2019 and many people in Saskatchewan, especially those living in rural and remote communities, have no public transportation options to get them where they need to go, and now wait for governments to do something.

When our provincial government made their wrong-headed decision in 2017, I wrote to members of the Prime Minister's cabinet, asking them to intervene, to restore public transportation service, and provide our people with relief.

First, they said that the private sector would serve us; cold comfort since Greyhound's decision to cease operations in Western Canada. Then, in Question Period, a Minister said that the federal government would work closely with my office to address this issue in a meaningful way.

Unfortunately, almost a year later, no-one from this government has stepped up to this promise.

The government announced in November that it would strike a working group to discuss the public transportation needs in Western Canada. I have asked the Minister of Transport directly to ensure that this working group includes members from affected communities, so that practical, local input can inform future decisions.

I hope he listens to the people.

The provincial government made the decision to abandon the people of Saskatchewan by cancelling the STC. Now, the federal government must step in to provide relief and ensure that people in Saskatchewan are connected to the services they need, just like people in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver.

We don't have to accept this new normal. Intra-provincial public transportation can be a reality in Saskatchewan again. But, we must continue the fight and demand a response from the federal government.

Together, we can ensure that everyone in Canada has access to safe, affordable public transportation.

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