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## Taking it back

“Colonized minds like to think of gender as the body you are in. Within Indigenous worldviews, we understood that it is your spirit.”  
- Jack Saddleback

By **NC Raine**  
for *Eagle Feather News*

They are known as those who walk between worlds, those who are able to stand in the middle, creating harmony. They are the ‘Gifted Ones’, blessed with two spirits, who are able to provide balance and facilitate healing in individuals, communities, and nations.

In 1990, at the Third Annual Native American/First Nations gay and lesbian conference in Winnipeg, Elder Myra Laramee had a vision in which the name “Two-Spirit” came to her. Recognizing the importance of that vision, Indigenous knowledge keeper and 2LGBTQ+ activist Albert McLeod worked with Indigenous people across the continent to recognize the name

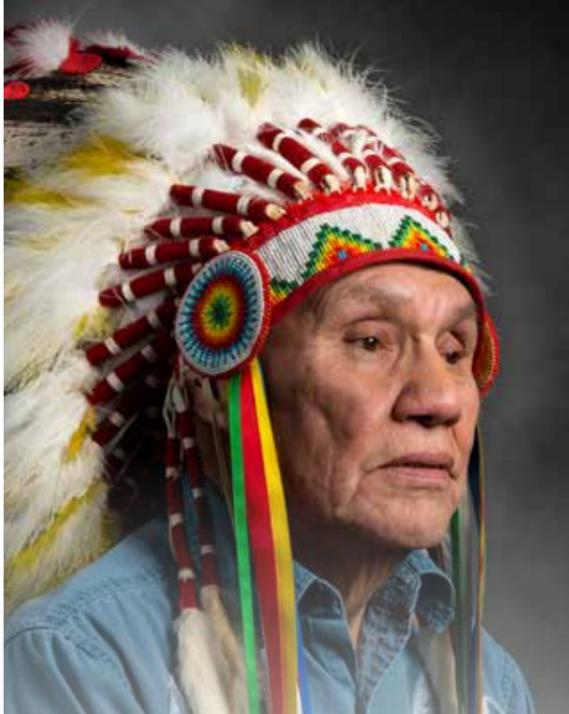
Two-Spirit (2S) to remember the important spiritual role that non-binary gender people played in their communities.

“It’s not meant to be a literal translation. Rather, a placeholder that showcases an Indigenous person’s right or inability to separate one’s Indigeneity and one’s gender and/or sexual orientations or diversity,” said Jack Saddleback, Co-Interim Director/Cultural and Projects Coordinator at OUTSaskatoon.

“It was always meant to be a placeholder until First Nations languages could get to a point where we revitalize those spaces,” he said.

In common parlance, “Two-Spirit” is sometimes simply thought of as ‘Indigenous and gay’, but the meaning, history, and role of 2S people is far more complex.

*continued page 2*



Late Noel Starblanket

## Words of our Elders

Later on in life, I began to understand the powers of my grandfather or grandmother and their connections. People would come from many hundreds of miles to see him for his medicines and healing techniques.

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June 2021 is our  
**Indigenous Peoples Day Issue**

NEXT MONTH:  
GRADUATION



President Glen McCallum & Vice-president Michelle LeClair

## New MN-S Leadership

“I’m prepared to go to the national level and address the issues we supposedly have. I’ll do my best to work with all the provinces to be able to get the best result of all Métis.”

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## TRIVIA QUIZ

## Indigenous History time ...

We have scoured the archives in the arts, sports, politics and history and have 25 questions to test your knowledge of obscure Indigenous stuff!

- page 14

## Two spirit term acknowledges historical acceptance of non-binary Indigenous people

*continued from page 1 ...*

"I define Two Spirit as a pan-Indigenous acknowledgment of the historical acceptance of gender and sexual diversity in Indigenous communities prior to colonization," said Saddleback.

There have long been stories about those gifted persons who carried both male and female spirits; women who engaged in tribal warfare and men who were the family caregivers. These 2S people were often regarded as the visionaries, the medicine people, the caretakers of orphans.

Saddleback references traditional stories from the Navajo (in the southern United States) which refer to the 'Nádleehí', as the ever-changing ones, the ones who weave and bring balance.

Other stories describe 2S people as having strong mystical powers. In one account, raiding warriors from a rival tribe immediately cease their attack when a 2S person stands before them with a simple stick.

That role of healer, balancer, and peacekeeper has not vanished.

"The role of 2S people today is the same as it always has been: to help communities to heal," said Marjorie Beaucage, Métis 2S filmmaker and activist.

"I believe that regardless of if the community acknowledges Two-Spirit people and the work we have been doing across the land, it will always be about healing the sexual wound. Whether it's HIV, AIDS, or sexual health. When you look at the people doing those things, most of them are Two-Spirit. We balance the masculine and feminine principles of the universe, and when that gets out of whack, it's our job to restore that balance. Healing won't happen in our communities until those roles are recognized," she said.

And while those roles are starting to become somewhat more recognized through the gay rights movement, things would look a lot differently now were it not for colonization, said Saddleback.

"If we look at the Indigenous worldviews of gender and sexuality, and if that was able to progress without the violence tactics of colonization, we wouldn't need any of these conversations happening because we (two spirit people) were already integrated so thoroughly in all aspects of our culture," he said.

Two spirit people continue to be denied important rights of passage. They sometimes find it difficult to find Elders who will sit with them, and are regularly subjected to homophobia, transphobia, and violence, he said.

"Colonized minds like to think of gender as the body you are in. Within Indigenous worldviews, we understood that it is your spirit. It is the spirit that is your gender, the roles you take on, the skills that you have, the responsibilities you hold, and ultimately, the gifts you offer the world," he said.

"It is not man or woman, it is so much more."



**Marjorie Beaucage, Métis Two Spirit filmmaker and activist, creator of the film *Coming in Stories: Two Spirit in Saskatchewan*. (Photo submitted)**

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# Two new baby bison at Wanuskewin Heritage Park

*By Sophia Lagimodiere  
for Eagle Feather News*

As visitors walk towards Wanuskewin Heritage Park's building, they are reminded of the integral role plains bison have to the area. On top of the Newo Asiniak site, a group of statues depict what the buffalo jump would have looked like before the animals were eradicated from the area nearly 150 years ago.

In 2019, something that was once "just a dream," as stated on their website by Dr. Ernie Walker, Chief Archaeologist and one of Wanuskewin's Founders, became a reality for the park. They introduced six heifer calves from Grasslands National Park, and later, four pregnant cows and a bull from the United States. In the spring of 2020, four calves were born on the traditional territory. At the end of this May, two more calves were born, bringing the herd to 17 buffalo.

Bailey Pelletier, an Interpretive Guide and Archaeologist at Wanuskewin, and a group she was touring, were the first to learn about the latest baby being born.

"We were standing out there, and I was talking about the bison and giving facts. I was like, 'we have 16 bison now. A baby was just born last week,'" Pelletier recalls. "And then a visitor was like 'I actually think there's two of them'... and so I looked behind me, and I

looked out with them, and sure enough, there was a second little blip out there by a mom, and we were the first to see it because no one had known."

"And I told them 'well, we have 17 bison now,'" Pelletier laughs. "Everyone was super excited. I texted my co-worker right away because she was at the front desk. I was like, 'oh my gosh, there's a sec-

stood at the bison viewing platform. The bison, including the babies, sat right in front where everyone could see them.

"I said it was my best bison tour I'll ever give. Never again will I be able to top that one," says Pelletier.

While not entirely sure, the park predicts one or two more babies to be born this summer. They hope to eventually expand the herd to 50 bison in an effort to help restore the land "back to balance," as stated on their website.

Initially, the park started to bring back the grasslands, as it is the most endangered biome in North America. By planting and re-introducing the bison, a keystone species to the grasslands, they have begun their goal of restoring the traditional area.

The significant connection that people have with the land and the bison is a reoccurring theme throughout the park.

"Indigenous people, we have a very special connection with the bison. We say we have a kinship with them. Thousands of years ago, the people had a very similar bond with them as well. They gave them everything they needed... It helped them survive here on the plains," says Pelletier.

"We wanted to bring Wanuskewin back to where it would have been thousands of years ago," says Pelletier. "[We wanted to] 'bring them home.'"



**Bison herd and two new babies hangout in their field at Wanuskewin. (Photo supplied)**

ond one.' So she started sending more people up."

What made the experience even better was how the herd started to walk towards them as they

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*Evelyn Benjoe and Kali Delorme paid their respect to the 215 souls, symbolized by children's shoes on the steps of the Saskatchewan Legislature, discovered at the Kamloops Indian Residential School. (Photo by Michael Dubois)*



Box 924 Saskatoon, SK S7K 3M4  
306-978-8118, 1-866-323-NEWS (6397)

**Eagle Feather News**

is published monthly by ACS Aboriginal Consulting Services

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Publications Mail Agreement No: 40027204 | OSSN #1492-7497  
Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to: EFN Circ., P.O. Box 924 Saskatoon SK S7K 3M4

**Subscriptions:**

The annual Canadian subscription rate is \$25/year, \$26.25 with GST. Bulk subscriptions are also available, call us for details. Subscription requests can be mailed or emailed to our office. Forms are available on our website.

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This issue was printed on:  
**June 10, 2021**  
Next issue to be printed on:  
**July 8, 2021**



# Investing in youth through Indigenous racing needed at this time

By Alyson Bear  
for Eagle Feather News

There is so much going on in our world right now. The recent discovery of the remains of 215 children on the grounds of the Kamloops Indian residential school at Tk'emlúps te Secwepemc First Nation cannot be overlooked, nor the many other burial grounds yet to be un-



**This young rider is benefiting from the Young Arrow program, connecting to horses and to culture. (Photo supplied)**

ered at other Indian Residential School sites.

Some days it feels like no matter how much proof there is, people continue to look away and deny the truth that Canada has been built on genocide. This is important to acknowledge when discussing our mental health and holistic wellbeing as a people. There are so many contributing factors when it comes to our health and Indian Residential Schools is a significant one for our Indigenous Nations.

The Covid-19 pandemic is an additional contributing factor creating stress, anxiety and depression in our communities. These can result in unhealthy coping mechanisms like addiction, self-harm and suicide. There are many different avenues to deal with the pain but now it is up to us to choose wisely. Because our ceremonies and way of life were targeted and outlawed by the Indian Act, causing identity crises, we now have to do the work to reclaim our ceremonies and ways of being that root us in our identity.

Knowing who we are makes us stronger to face the ongoing barriers and adversities from the wider society of systemic discrimination from ongoing colonialism and genocidal tactics our people and people of color are faced with. The purpose and intention of the Indian Residential School System was to “kill the Indian in the child” and therefore feeling ashamed of who we are has been passed down inherently. It is a new era where our youth are taking pride in who we are and reclaiming the truth in our history.

Indigenous excellence and revitalization of traditional practices needs to be highlighted and at the forefront, especially for our youth. The Elite Indian Relay Association promotes and has given space for the new Young Arrow program and the sacred connection we once had with horses. This connection to horses is healing: those who have been around them in nature know how good it is for our mental health and

holistic wellbeing.

I attended the Indian Relay Races in early June at Poundmaker Cree Nation and in May at Marquis Downs in Saskatoon, where I spoke with Chief Tanya Aguilar-Antiman of the Mosquito Grizzly Bear's Head Lean Man First Nation who is one of the founders and Managers of Young Arrow.

“Young Arrow was created to inspire upcoming warriors; promote self-pride and confidence; promote nation to nation pride and relations; balancing, promoting and encouraging the Indigenous languages and cultures within the fastest Canadian horse sport Indian relay,” she said.

“Young Arrow provides opportunity for youth and horses to come together to bond, to learn responsibility, having a sense of purpose, and healing through building a relationship collectively. Young Arrow youth Indian relay clinics are held nation to nation; the overall outcome goal is to provide the opportunity for youth to be affiliated to a youth Indian relay team.”

Young Arrow was only launched this year and has had more than 60 participants with eight youth in each session and will be expanding in the years to come. Young Arrow is run through sponsorship, so the youth do not have to pay to participate. There are health benefits that come from our connection to all living things. Our oral history is that our connection to horses was known as medicine.

We take this time to reflect on the realities of the dark relationship Indigenous peoples have with Canada, but also on how we are pushing forward as Nations for our youth of today and tomorrow. As Indigenous peoples are the fastest growing population in Canada we need to be investing in our youth.

For more information about Young Arrow contact 306-480-8063.

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# Road Allowance theme of new children, youth literature

By NC Raine  
for Eagle Feather News

It's a dark part of Canadian history, marked by poverty and oppression, that two writers are using to shine a light on the fortitude of Métis people.

After the Northwest Resistance in 1885, many Métis people were dispersed into the fringes of parkland and forested regions throughout the prairies, while others began establishing communities on Crown land. As this land was intended for future roads, the Métis who created makeshift communities were called 'Road Allowance people'.

Life for the Road Allowance people was stark. Houses were often uninsulated and built with recycled materials; families were often forced to leave their homes with little notice; workers were paid minimal wages or bits of food for doing physical labour; impoverished Métis were often fined or jailed for fishing and hunting without a license; children lacked educational opportunities and were subject to racism from the settler communities.

"I really wanted to bring focus on the Road Allowance, which I think is this bizarre genocide-by-bureaucracy era that was actually very violent and devastating," said Métis author Katherena Vermette.

"All of our nation's history need to be introduced to everybody. Often what's told about us is very different from that story that actually happened to us."

Vermette's new graphic novel, *Road Allowance Era*, is the fourth and final book in the series, *A Girl Called Echo*, in which a 13 year old Métis is transported through time to experience significant periods of Métis history. The four volumes cover the Pemmican Wars, the Red River Resistance, the Northwest Resistance, and the Road Allowance.

In *Road Allowance Era*, Vermette takes her readers from the trial and execution of Louis Riel, through the Road Allowance period in the early 1900s, to present day – all of which is deeply connected to who the Métis are now, she said.

"We're still feeling the affects of Road Allowance now, the affects of the execution of Louis Riel, it's still very much in the politics, it's engaged in our lawsuits. It's why we are where we are," she said.

"People built homes and communities, and for arbitrary reasons, were told to move. Generations of people were displaced, often with huge impacts felt over generations."

In researching the Road Allowance period for her novel, Vermette spoke with historians and Métis scholars, and read volumes of first hand experiences from people on the Road Allowance. Her novel concentrates largely on events in Manitoba, including the tragic burning of Ste. Madeleine in 1938, in which a Métis community was burned as part of a federal government program designed to clear land and create pasture for settler farmers.

"Unlike the Red River Resistance or Northwest Resistance, which were armed insurrections where people were fighting on a battlefield, what disturbed me about the Road Allowance era, it wasn't the same type of fight. It was a bureaucratic fight. It seems like it's not as deadly, but it is. It's this slow erosion of our rights and slow desolation of our communities."

The idea with her graphic novel, said Vermette, is not only to engage young minds with important Métis history and culture, but to inspire youth through the resilience and strength shown by those who lived through the Road Allowance era.

It's a similar purpose to that of Wilfred Burton, a Métis writer and educator from Glaslyn, Saskatchewan, whose two children's books about the period, *Road Allowance Kitten*, and *Road Allowance Kitten: Broken Promises* weigh this complex history in an accessible way for young minds.

"I wanted to engage younger children with this quite devastating story, yet have them engaged, interested, and even have some hope. That's how the cat came into the story," said Burton.

The two books follow history through the eyes of two young children and their kitten, as they're forced out of their homes on the Road Allowance and relocated to unfamiliar parts of the province.

"This is a part our history that need to be exposed and remembered. It needs to be part of the curriculum in our schools."

Burton, who has worked in education since 1979, including stints at SUNTEP and consulting with Regina Public Schools, is well aware of the gaps in Indigenous history. He said he is constantly finding out from people what was left out of their education on Canadian history. And, prior to his two Road Allowance books, there were no stories for young children on the subject.

"I was familiar with the stories because growing up, we had 39 children in my grade one class, about a third of who were Métis. By the time we were in grade 4 or 5, it was just me and my cousin because the rest had been kicked



Katherena Vermette, author of *A Girl Called Echo: Road Allowance Era*  
(Photo by Lohit Jagwani)

off the Road Allowance."

Through his career, Burton said colleagues and students would tell him their own stories of the Road Allowance, all of which were unique but shared a common theme of trauma and resilience.

"At the end of my book, the cat has her own kittens. It's a metaphor about our people. We are resilient, we bounce back," he said.

"So I feel its important for this story to get bigger and bigger, with more and more voices over time, so we can come to a greater understanding of what the government did to our people."

## Re-Opening Roadmap

Starting Sunday, May 30th, Step 1 of the Re-Opening Roadmap will come into effect

### STEP 1 Sunday, May 30th

- Restaurants and bars open, maximum 6 at a table
- 30% capacity or 150 people (*whichever is less*) at places of worship
- Group fitness classes can resume, with three metres between participants
- Limit of 10 people at private indoor, outdoor and household gatherings
- Limit 30 people at public indoor gatherings
- Limit 150 people at public outdoor gatherings
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STEP 2 Sunday, June 20th

STEP 3 To be determined

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Saskatchewan

# Angels: 215 >, 1820 – 1979 “The Past is Always Our Present”

By Louise B. Halfe-Sky Dancer  
for Eagle Feather News

A cradle board hangs from a tree  
A beaded moss bag is folded in a small chest  
A child’s moccasin is tucked  
Into a skunk Pipe bag  
Children’s shoes in a ghost dance.  
A mother clutches these  
Palms held against her face  
A river runs between her fingers.

A small boy covered in soot  
On all fours a naked toddler  
Plays in the water, while her Kokom’s skirt  
Is wet to her calves.

“How tall are you now?” she asked.  
“I’m bigger than the blueberry shrub,  
Oh, as tall as an Aspen  
Where my birth was buried.  
See my belly-button?”

Each have dragged a rabbit to the tent, a tipi  
Watched expert hands  
Skin, butcher, make berry soup for dinner.  
Boy falls a robin with a slingshot  
He is shown how to skewer the breast  
Roast the bird on hot coals.  
He will not kill  
Without purpose, again.

The tipi, tent, the log-shack are empty  
Trees crane their heads through  
The tipi flaps, the tent door  
Through the cracks of the mud-shack.

A mother’s long wail from 1890  
Carried in the wind. A grandparent  
Pokes embers, a sprinkle of tobacco,  
Cedar, sweetgrass, fungus, sage  
Swirls upward.

Children’s creeks  
Trickle in their sleep.  
A blanket of deep earth  
Covered fingers entwined  
Arms around each other.

We have been  
Waiting.

It is time to release  
This storm  
That consumes all this nation.  
Awasis, this spirit-light, these angels  
Dance in the flame.

The bones  
Will share their stories.

Listen. Act.  
These children are ours.  
Could be.....Yours.  
Copyright: Louise B. Halfe-Sky Dancer



Louise B. Halfe-Sky Dancer. (photo submit-)

Parliamentary Poet Laureate Louise Halfe invites Indigenous published poets to submit their poetry to the Parliamentary website. Follow this link for more information. <https://lop.parl.ca/About/Parliament/Poet/index-e.html>

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# Indigenous doctors bridge western, traditional medicine

By Betty Ann Adam  
of Eagle Feather News

Indigenous Doctors Veronica McKinney and Rachel Netahe Asiniwasis are bridging the distance between western medicine and traditional healing.

McKinney remembers a patient who was so accustomed to being given short shrift by doctors that he wept when she placed a sympathetic hand on his shoulder.



**Dr. Veronica McKinney says culture can be a powerful influence on your health. She notes the stronger culture is in a community, the healthier the people are. (Photo supplied)**

She examined the man, who was in his 40s, and discovered he had been born with a condition, that caused pain and other problems, but no doctor had ever examined him carefully enough to diagnose the problem.

"I always thought I was too dirty to be touched because nobody has ever examined me or touched me," he told her.

"You'd be shocked how many people have never been examined, ever. They've been labeled as drug seekers, they may or may not have received medicine," said McKinney, who is the Director of Northern Medical Services with the College of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan

She and Asiniwasis are often advocates.

When the funding agency Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) de-listed a prescription-grade moisturizer needed to help a common skin treatment work, Asiniwasis argued with them and convinced them to reinstate its funding.

Asiniwasis, the first Indigenous dermatologist in Canada, says there is a great need for skin specialists who understand the specific needs of Indigenous people, especially those who live in remote communities.

Overcrowded housing, inflated prices for healthy food and basic skin care products, lack of local medical laboratories and even, sometimes lack of clean water for washing have led to a skin health crisis in some First Nations, she said.

"The skin is a manifestation of both internal and external health, and In-

igenous populations face unique challenges and barriers compared to the general Canadian population," she said.

Asiniwasis has a private practice and holds regular outreach clinics in northern and southern Saskatchewan.

In March she hosted the first national Indigenous Skin Summit to improve patient care and treatment in a culturally holistic context. She released Calls to Action for the medical community that includes requiring extra dermatology training and cultural competency for people who will work in remote communities.

McKinney says culture can be a powerful influence.

"A lot of our traditional medicines can be teas and things like that, but a lot of it is around ceremony and having access to learning and understanding your culture. It's the actual traditional ways of doing things. Maybe it's participating in a sweat or a fast.

Many studies have confirmed it can help mental health "substantially, and way more than the medications can," McKinney said.

A study done in British Columbia in the 1980s examined why some First Nations communities suffered higher suicide rates than others and found that the stronger the culture was in the community, the healthier the people were, she said.

"We see that and so many of our community people know that," McKinney said.

"I use the medicine wheel to consider what are the challenges in all of these areas and what are the strengths and how can we build upon those strengths," she said.

Plain talk is important too.

"Breaking down that power differential is really critical. I see that as part of my role. And helping people to be gentle with themselves in terms of the trauma that they've experienced and helping them recognize that they're still here and (they've) been resilient... Sometimes it's just listening to people.

"I hope I can help people feel a little more empowered in their health and their health care, then I feel like I've done something. If I can help somebody crack a smile, I'm happy and it makes me feel good."

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# Pestilence and Famine Clause, Treaty Six

By Sheldon Krasowski with Jamin Mike  
of the Office of the Treaty Commissioner

The Office of the Treaty Commissioner (OTC) Library & Archives was recently opened by Treaty Commissioner Mary Culbertson, and although our reading room is currently closed to the public, we can share documents and stories through this column.

The OTC archives collection includes primary archival documents, secondary publications, and a large oral history collection that all relate to the history of Treaties in Canada. While the COVID-19 pandemic is still impacting communities, this column will spotlight the pestilence and famine clause

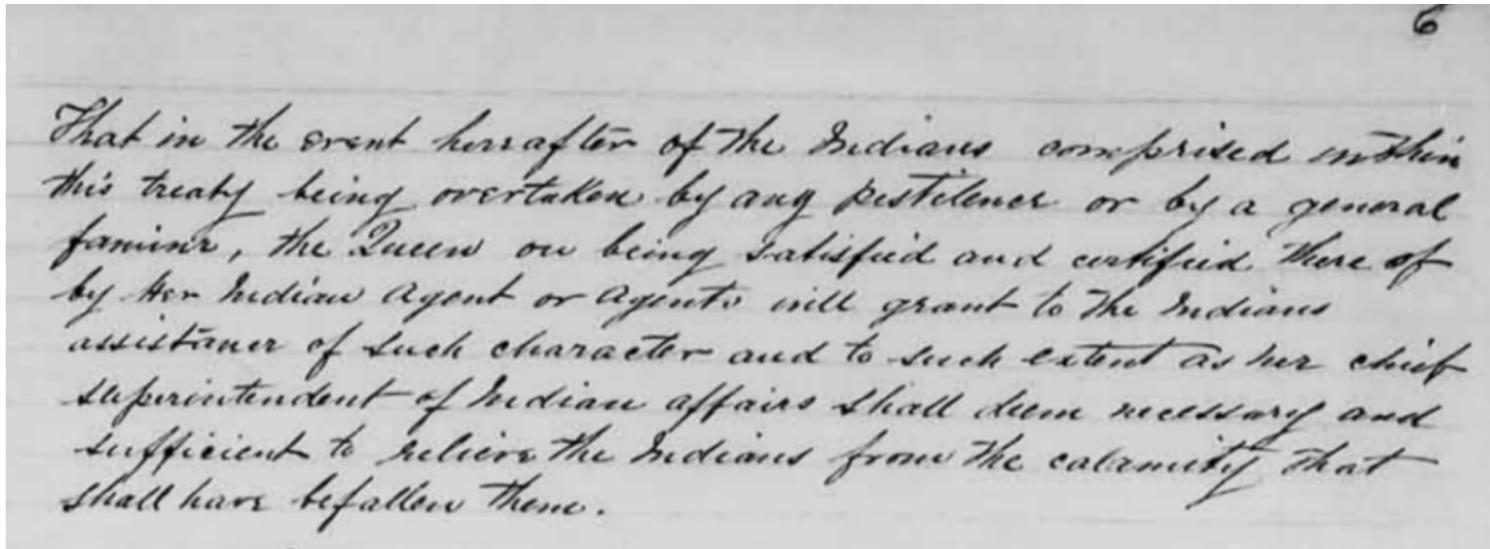
calamity, the Indigenous leadership looked for protection from the Canadian authorities.

At the close of the Treaty Six negotiations, the Treaty Commissioners submitted the Treaty text to the Canadian government. Although Canada ratified Treaty Six, the Privy Council office was hesitant to accept the famine and pestilence clause. Treaty Commissioner Morris was censured for adding a “novel provision binding the Government to come to the assistance of the Indians included in the Treaty, in the event of their being visited by any pestilence and famine.”

Morris argued that assistance in times of pestilence was always given by civilized governments, but he was relieved of his commission. When Treaty

Seven was negotiated one year later, David Laird was commissioner, but the famine and pestilence clause was not mentioned.

As a non-Indigenous settler originally from Saskatoon, and someone who studies Treaties, the medicine chest and pestilence and famine clauses are central to the Treaty relationship. First Nations agreed to share their land with newcomers through Treaties in exchange for promises like relief from pestilence or calamity. It is important that non-Indigenous peoples honour these promises in return.



**The pestilence and famine clause as written into the original manuscript of Treaty Six, The Treaty of Forts Carlton and Pitt, 1876.**

of Treaty Six, The Treaty of Forts Carlton and Pitt, 1876.

The pestilence and famine clause does not originate with the Canadian government. It was instead included in a list of demands submitted by Chiefs Mistawasis and Ahtahkakoop at the Fort Carlton Treaty Six negotiations. These demands were read aloud during the negotiations on August 23, 1876 and Treaty Commissioner Alexander Morris promised the new terms would be added to the Treaty text. The pestilence and famine clause as written into the Treaty Six text reads:

That in the event hereafter of the Indians comprised within this treaty being overtaken by any pestilence or by a general famine, the Queen on being satisfied and certified thereof by her Indian Agent or Agents will grant to the Indians assistance of such character and to such extent as her chief superintendent of Indian Affairs shall deem necessary and sufficient to relieve the Indians from the calamity that shall have befallen them.

According to the Crown's literal interpretation of Treaty rights, the text of Treaty Six clearly describes an obligation to “come to the assistance of” and “relieve the calamity” facing Indigenous peoples.

The Treaty Elders' oral histories have a more holistic interpretation of the pestilence and famine clause, and this includes the medicine chest. The request for medicines was also included in the list of demands, but Canada separated the two clauses when they were added to the Treaty text. The medicine chest clause ensures health protections for Indigenous peoples, but it also protects Indigenous medicines. Elder Peter Waskahat of the Frog Lake Cree Nation said:

We had our own doctors, our own medicine people. There were a lot of teachings, lifelong teachings that were passed from generation to generation ... so we had our own medical system as well.

Elder Waskahat, and many Treaty Elders have explained that the intent behind the medicine chest promise was to protect the health of Indigenous peoples. This included protection against European introduced diseases and also the protection of Indigenous medicines. In this respect, protection from pestilence and famine, and the protections of traditional medicines are interrelated.

Prior to the Treaty Six negotiations a smallpox epidemic occurred (1869-70) and many lives were lost. As William Francis Butler reported, “A terrible disease has swept through the Indian tribes of Saskatchewan. Small-pox had passed from tribe to tribe, leaving in its tracks depopulated wigwams and vacant council-lodges; thousands had perished ...” Butler was tasked with delivering medicines to those affected by the disease, and although some people were saved, many more had died. In the face of future pestilence or

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## Words of our Elders: Noel Starblanket

*These memories of the late Noel Starblanket, are excerpts from the book *acahkosa k-ohtakohpit-One who uses a star for a blanket*. The elders were recorded, photographed and published by Ted Whitecalf and a team, including Marilyn Poitras, Sheldon Poitras, Darren Okemaysim, Marion Goodman, Penelope Sanz, Jacqueline Gabriel and the late Pamela Whitecalf, Sweetgrass Records. Check back monthly for words from our elders.*

My name is Noel Starblanket. I was born September 27, 1946. My middle name is Victor. I was named after my dad. When I was a baby, my parents took me to my grandparents, my dad's parents, to be named and, in that ceremony, I was given the name Pahpahtaywakihiw, which means loosely translated Spotted Eagle. I went through life and became involved in politics and a whole bunch of other things that were not in keeping with our traditions....

Other than that, I try to support young people who are in leadership positions now. Some of them don't understand what I went through, the experiences I went through. One of the fondest recollections I have is when my dad was a Chief. In those days they didn't have per diems or government money for travelling around and things like that. The Chiefs decided to take the provincial vote on alcohol. In the early 1950s, I was just a little child, my dad was a Chief and there were other Chief's in Southern Saskatchewan who didn't agree because the Treaty didn't call for that so they formed their own organization called the Qu'Appelle Advisory Council of Chiefs Independent that followed the Treaty. It was based entirely on Treaty. They went around to communities and I would go with my dad. The Chief hosting the meeting was the Chairperson of the meeting and that's how they did it, very democratically. All different communities around Southern Saskatchewan, I remember that. Late Lawrence Thompson and late John Gamble, people like that, were part of that with my dad. They took up a collection either they made a pie social or something and they gave all those people a little bit of gas money to get home and fed them. They had their meetings and talked about Treaties. I grew up listening to that.

I was able to write so my dad would say write down what you remember

about these Old People talking, these leaders, so I would write for him and I'd bring it home. We didn't have power or electricity or anything like that, running water, nothing, just a coal oil lamp, we used to have to cut wood. At night, he'd take out his Treaty book and say read for me because his eyes were failing, all those years he was reading at night with that lamp, very dim light. So I would read for him about the Treaty and that was my steeping in learning about Treaty. That's how I picked it up, going around with all those Old People. I was very honoured. It didn't mean much to me at that time, it was a chore, but later on in my life, I realized how fortunate I was to have that experience, knowledge and education.

I also remember the Department of Indian Affairs Indian Agent would come in twenty below and we never invited those people in our house. He sat outside in his little half ton truck, Citizenship and Immigration on the side, that's where Indian Affairs was in those days, he would open his window just enough for my dad to talk, he never invited him in his truck, and he would conduct business through that window. My dad would stand outside in twenty below and that's how that Indian Agent conducted business with my dad who was Chief. I'll never forget that, it was a very poignant experience for me to see. I used to look out and watch them. I used to wonder what they were talking about. I used to wonder, you know. Stuff like that I grew up with and, of course, we did a lot of hunting.

I remember hunting rabbits with my brothers. I had five older brothers, I'm the youngest son. We used to hunt rabbits and we'd get maybe forty or fifty in a day. We'd take them out and give them to people in the community. Same thing in the summer, ducks. We'd get maybe two hundred and go around giving them out. I remember going to pick sweet grass with my grandfather and grandmother and picking Seneca root and other medicines, mint. They would teach me how to pick them. They had homemade diggers and after we'd pick, we'd put them out and dry them.

After they were dry, he'd take his tobacco in the Star Blanket Village, the west end, and go to the Old People.



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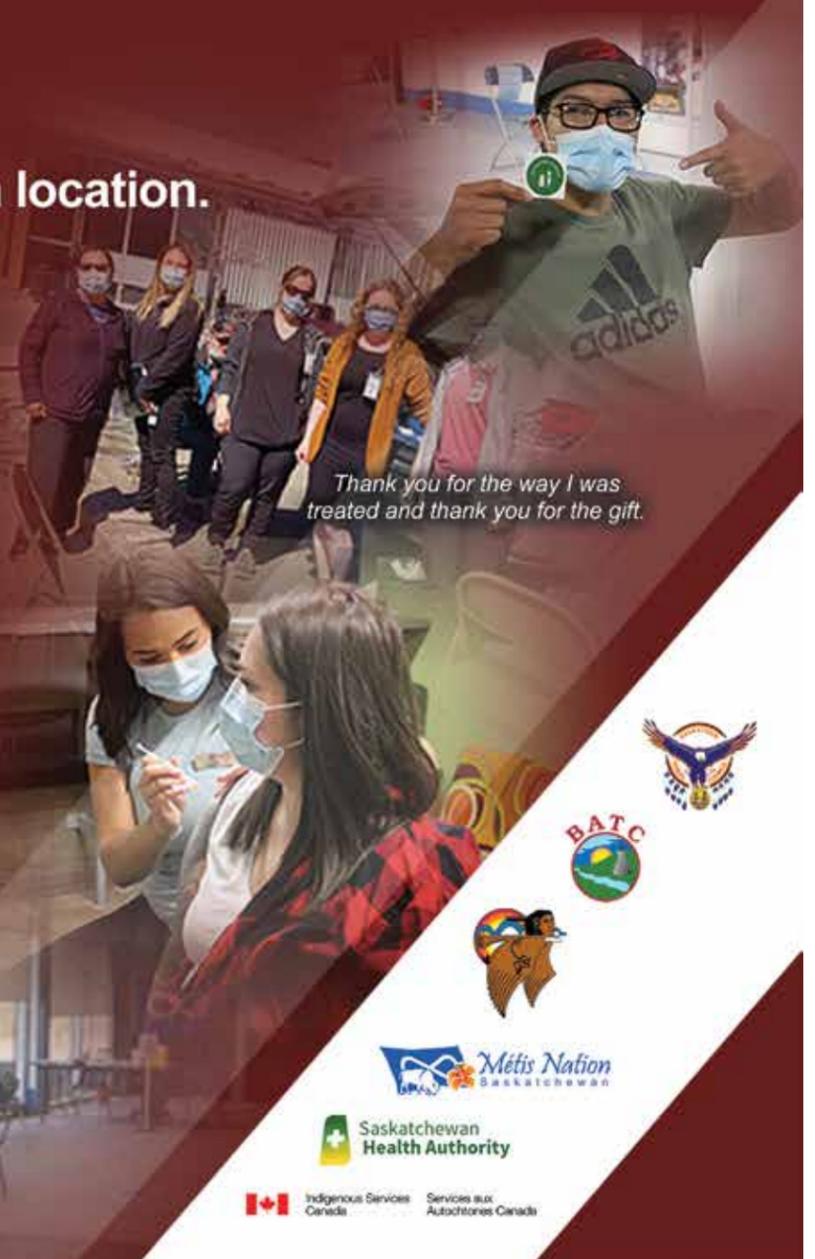
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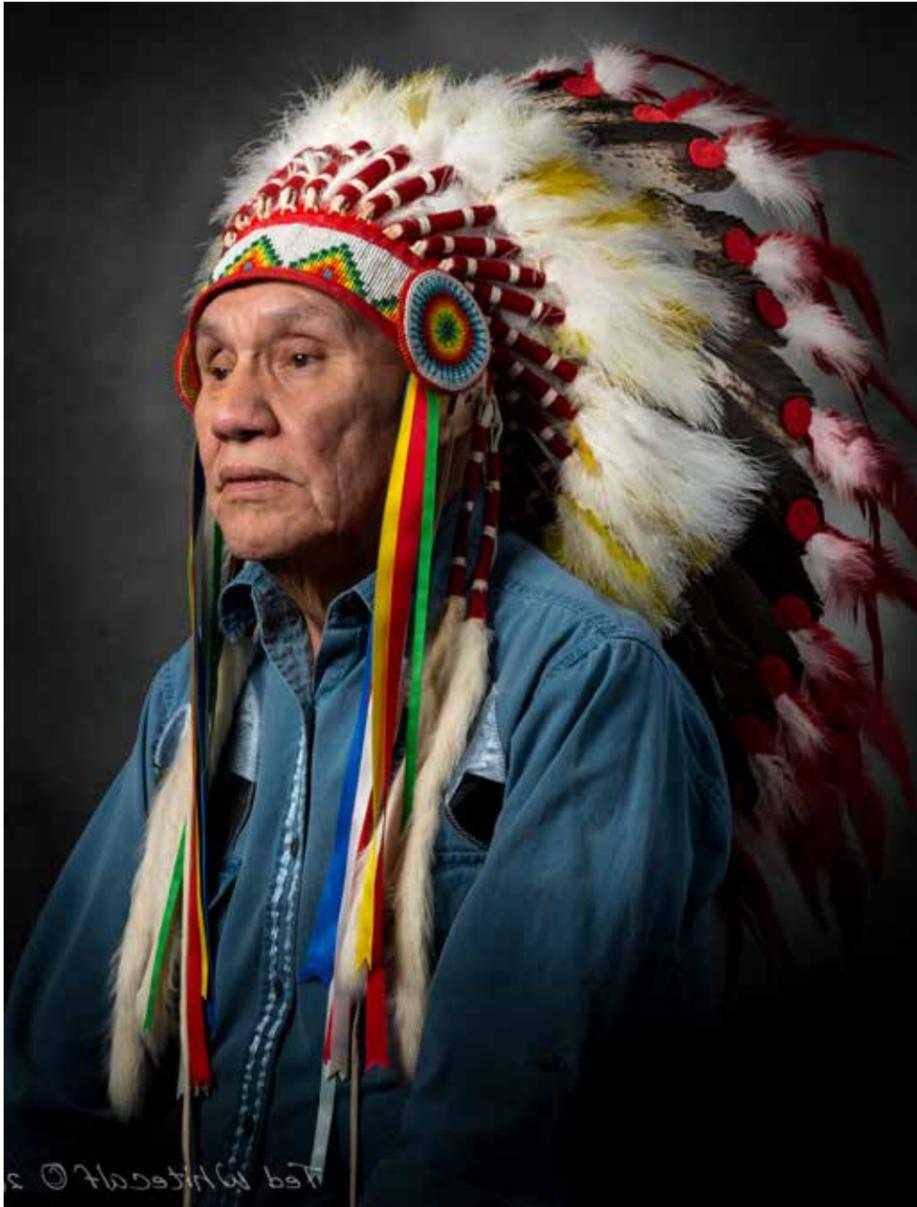
Call to book your vaccination appointment: 1-833-653-0002 (STC)

Book online with Saskatoon Tribal Council: [sktc.sk.ca](http://sktc.sk.ca)



*Thank you for the way I was  
treated and thank you for the gift.*

Indigenous Services Canada Services aux Autochtones Canada



**The late Noel Starblanket reflects on ceremony, hunting, Treaty and leadership in his far ranging interview with Ted Whitecalf for the book *acahkosa k-ohtakohpit*-One who uses a star for a blanket. (Photo by Ted Whitecalf)**

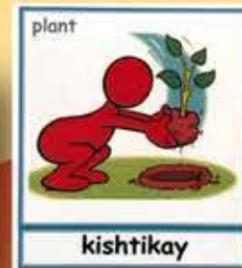
Those Old People didn't speak English. They didn't have English names Mistihkoman, Waniskaw Old Wake Up and all those Old People just spoke Cree. My grandfather would go and give them tobacco and tell them come tonight to the house we're going to sing, pray and make medicine. I would sit with those Old People, and they'd laugh and tell stories and then they'd get serious. They always had their pipe, and they'd pray and sing and then make medicine and give everybody who was there a little bit of medicine, maybe a package, for their sicknesses or whatever. I grew up with that.

My grandfather was a Sun Dance maker. I remember, I was six or seven years old, maybe, they had this tipi, the first night where they had all those sacred objects, they would pray and sing. They'd have Oskapewis looking after these things and he said somebody always has to be with these things. You can't leave them. If everybody leaves, you have to be there. Well, son of a gun, if it didn't happen, they all left and I was the only one there. I was scared. I didn't know what to do. I was keeping the fire, keeping the smudge going. I could hear murmuring and I'd look around, I'd be scared. I kept it going anyway. I don't know how long it was, it seemed like an hour, but it was probably only about five minutes. Scared the heck out of me so this guy came back and, boy, I took off out of there. I was telling my cousins and brothers, those guys left me and scared the heck out of me. They just laughed at me. That was my first spiritual experience I recollect. I'll never forget that and, of course, I had many more after that with my grandfather and grandparents.

Later on in life, I began to understand the powers of my grandfather or grandmother and their connections. People would come from many hundreds of miles to see him for his medicines and healing techniques. He never went anywhere. They always came to him and, often times, just for tobacco he did these things. I remember him, also, healing me when I got sick. Some Métis people lived on the edge of the reserve used to come and see him and my Grandmother.

(Ed. Note: This Elder's Story is an excerpt of a longer piece that will be available on the Eagle Feather News website as of June 30, 2021)

**Saskatoon Indian & Métis Friendship Centre  
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# Our Voices



## Indigenous Languages Close to Home

**TUNE IN STARTING  
June 21, 2021  
National Indigenous Peoples Day**



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## Water walkers honouring North Saskatchewan River this summer

By Betty Ann Adam  
of Eagle Feather News

This summer, a small band of women will walk the length of the North Saskatchewan River, from its headwaters in the Rocky Mountains to Lake Winnipeg, in a two-month ceremony to honour and protect the water.

Tasha Beeds, a Saskatchewan Cree-Metis, will lead the 1,900 kilometer Water Walk, continuing the tradition that was passed to her by Josephine-BA Mandamin (the Ba suffix is an Anishnaabe marker for one who is deceased), an Ojibway from Manitoulin Island and a world renowned water activist, who conducted ceremonial Water Walks around each of the Great Lakes and other bodies of water for 15 years.

Beeds joined her on many of those walks and promised Josephine-Ba, before her passing in 2018, to carry on this women's ceremony.

"It's about raising consciousness about the life of the water," Beeds said.

"I'm entering into ceremony for the water because the water needs us to remember who we are as Indigenous people... I'm moving in ceremony for that water, because all of life is dependant on that water."

Last fall, Marjorie Beaucage, an artist and lifelong environmental activist, and Karen Gitlitz, the minister of Saskatoon's Unitarian Congregation, asked Beeds to lead them on a Water Walk for the Saskatchewan River.

The Unitarians had asked Beaucage to teach them about action for reconciliation and in the course of that, she'd told them about the need to protect the water and about the Water Walkers.

Beaucage had, for years, wanted to join Josephine-Ba, so when Gitlitz said she wanted to do a walk for the Saskatchewan River, Beaucage knew the time was right.

They didn't balk when Beeds told them about the scale of the commitment. It means walking the entire length of the river, which is likely to take two or three months. Once begun, the water must keep moving forward, never back. Beeds, at least, must walk for the same body of water for four years. She plans to do part of one year's trek by canoe, from Lake Winnipeg to Hudson's Bay. In another



**Tash Beeds will lead a two-month-long ceremonial Water Walk for the Saskatchewan River this summer. (Photo by Sweetmoon Photography)**

year, she will walk the length of the South Saskatchewan River.

Beeds is from Saskatchewan but now lives in Ontario, where she did all her previous walks, but had always wanted to return home and walk for the water that her Métis ancestors had traveled upon.

This walk will be more challenging than the previous ones because it starts in the mountains.

"Every single person from Manitoba to Alberta should be looking at those Rockies because we are connected to that watershed. It connects to the Saskatchewan River, which connects to Lake Winnipeg and all of the tributaries in between. So whatever happens at the headwaters is going to impact all of the waterways," Beeds said.

A Walker carries water from the river in a copper pail and an eagle staff carrier accompanies her. His role is to protect the woman and ensure the road ahead is clear of obstructions.

"There's a role for everyone. If you're gender fluid, you're welcome to come and carry the water staff" or walk between him and the water carrier, she said.

The walkers take turns, relay style, never stopping the forward movement of the water, except to sleep.

The group will walk on roadways that travel approximately along the river, starting at Saskatchewan Crossing between Banff and Jasper, making their way through Edmonton, North Battleford, Prince Albert and then to Lake Winnipeg.

The core group will also include Michaela Merasty, Kahtéraks Quiney-Goodleaf and Linda Manitowabi, the latter two are from Ontario.

Supporters are welcome to join the walkers along the way, though they will have to follow strict COVID protocols.



**Tasha Beeds and an Ontario walker, Liz Osawamick, collecting water in a copper pail at Scugog River for a 2014 Water Walk. (Photo supplied)**

The core group is still lacking a man to carry the eagle feather staff. Beeds has faith the right person will join them. If not, she will carry the staff herself.

The group has already attracted some sponsorship but they will also need to cover Elder honoraria, food and supplies. Those who wish to donate are invited to e-transfer [livingwaterwalk@gmail.com](mailto:livingwaterwalk@gmail.com) or donate through the Saskatoon Unitarians.

The Water Walkers are wishing for a sponsored RV rental or donation so they can minimize use of hotels and interactions with people outside their bubble. If that doesn't happen, they'll make do with a three-person camper and tents.

Follow Saskatchewan River Water Walk 2021 on Facebook for updates, education and how to get involved.

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# Welcome to the annual Eagle Feather News Quiz

By John Lagimodiere  
of Eagle Feather News

Welcome to our annual National Indigenous Peoples Day history and trivia quiz. We have scoured the archives in the arts, sports, politics and history and have 25 questions to test your knowledge of obscure Indigenous stuff! Don't waste time, grab a buddy and quiz each other to see who's the best trivia master in your house. Good luck!

1. James Smith had a brother named John Smith. They split at the time of Treaty and each signed independently. James Smith Cree Nation was James' First Nation. What is the name of John Smith's First Nation?

A. Sturgeon Lake First Nation B. Cumberland House Cree Nation C. Muskeg Lake First Nation D. Muskeg Lake Cree Nation

2. How many children across Canada are estimated to have been taken from their parents during the so-called 60's Scoop?

A. 20,000 B. 50,000 C. 10,000 D. 150,000

3. How much was the settlement agreement for compensation for the survivors of the 60's Scoop and creation of a national healing foundation?

A. \$400 million B. \$750 million C. \$500 million D. \$800 million



**This activist has her sights set on changing the name of Dewdney Avenue in Regina to Buffalo Avenue. (Photo EFN archive)**

4. This player from Cote First Nation patrols the blue line for Canada's Women's National Team.

A. Hayley Wickenheiser B. Brigitte Lacquette C. Sheila Gretzky D. Amanda Lindros

5. This former performer and whiz kid from Regina, is now the head of the Canadian Medical Association.

A. Errol Kinistino B. James Makokis C. The guy who says Victor D. Alika Lafontaine

6. This community champion is the push behind renaming Dewdney Ave-

nue in Regina Buffalo Avenue.

A. Tina Goodfoot B. Joely BigEagle-Kequahtoway C. Candace Montgard D. Tina Keeper

7. What was the estimated Indigenous population of the Americas before Columbus came and wrecked it?

A. ~60 million B. ~100 million C. ~10 million D. ~40 million

8. This singer/actor got her start at the Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company and has risen to doing national tours of the Thompson Highway play *The Postmistress*.

A. Andrea Menard B. Tantoo Cardinal C. Krystle Pederson D. Kim Cattrall

9. "Come and Get your Love," a 70's classic rejuvenated after being played in the movie *Guardians of the Galaxy*. Many were surprised to discover the song was by the Indigenous band...

A. Red Thunder B. Kansas C. Redbone D. Alabama

10. This ballet dancer and actor is famous for films like *Dance Me Outside*, but now he is starring in the first Indigenous-run mainstream comedy, *Rutherford Falls*. Hint...he's from Muskeg Lake Cree Nation.

A. Joe Lafond B. Jeffery Greyeyes C. Mike Venne D. Michael Greyeyes

11. Going against the orders of General Middleton, this Colonel had his troops march to the Cut Knife camp where they took a licking from Poundmaker's Cree warriors.

A. Colonel Otter B. Colonel Beaver C. Baron von Manfrenchen d. Colonel Smith

12. Saturday May 9th, 1885, the Métis wiped out the Canadian Navy. What ship did they disable by lowering a cable across the South Saskatchewan River?

A. The SS Minnow B. The Northcote C. The Enterprise D. The SS MacDonald

13. This racist judge wanted to punish "Indians" after the Riel Resistance, and he sentenced eight First Nation men to death. What did the First Nations people refer to him as?

A. Judge Judy B. Bad Judge Tom C. Hanging Judge Rouleau D. Judge Death

14. This esteemed Chief was a strong proponent of Treaty and was the push behind creating the Treaty 4 flag. Now he has a building named after him at the University of Saskatchewan.

A. Chief Gordon Oakes B. Chief Kahkewistahaw C. Chief Cote D. Chief Piapot

15. This award-winning actor and artist is the curator of the Chief Poundmaker Museum.

A. Milton Tootosis B. Floyd Favel C. Dave Antoine D. Michelle Smith

16. In 1967 she was the first woman elected to the executive of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. A member of the Canoe Lake First Nation she went on to become a ground breaking lawyer.

A. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond B. Jodi Wilson-Raybould C. Anita Langan D. Delia Opekokew

17. While in exile in the United States, Louis Riel clandestinely met with this President to ask for help against the Canadians. He was refused. Who was the president?

A. George Washington B. Henry Van Burren C. Ulysses Grant D. Ronald Reagan

18. This woman was widowed with nine children after the Battle of Batoche, had her house ransacked and cattle stolen, and fields destroyed. On the last day of battle, she lost two sons, one died later from tuberculosis and another two daughters to sickness.

A. Madam Josephite Tourand B. Catherine Letendre C. Judith Parenteau D.

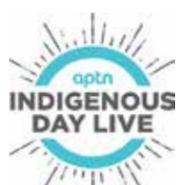


**This gent is the first Indigenous head of the CMAA. (Photo CMA website)**

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# News Indigenous history and trivia quiz!

Veronique Fiddler



head of the Canadian Medical Association.

19. In 1935, this man began trying to organize the Métis in Saskatchewan. The retired railroader toured and activated and helped establish the Saskatchewan Métis Society in 1937.

A. Henry McKenzie B. Joseph Ross C. Jimmy Daniels D. Robert Deschambeault

20. This former Crown Prosecutor is a member of the Lac La Ronge Indian Band and has become a prolific writer of fiction and non-fiction, including Peace and Good Order: The Case for Indigenous Justice in Canada.

A. Jim Head B. Tom Longboat C. Harold R. Johnson D. Farley Mowat

21. In the ten-year window of 1901-1911, due to massive immigration, the percentage of Indigenous people in the province of Saskatchewan dropped from 19.0% to what?

A. 10% B. 6.8% C. 1% D. 2.4%

22. In 1905, Mosquito, Grizzly Bears Head, Lean Man First Nation lost 5,800 acres of reserve land. What was the amount of their final compensation package?

A. \$70 million B. \$100 million C. \$250 million D. \$141 million

23. Fond du Lac is one of the oldest, most northern remote communities in Saskatchewan. The North West Company first established Fond du Lac as trading post in which decade?

A. 1790s B. 1810s C. 1860s D. 1760s

24. The 1821 Hudson's Bay Company and Northwest Company merger made this trading post the administrative centre of the English River District.

A. Cumberland House B. Île-à-la-Crosse C. Green Lake D. Buffalo



This actor/singer/dancer starred in Thompson Highway's classic, the Postmistress. (Photo by Marg Pederson)

Narrows

25. What person's judicial appointment in 1998, making them Saskatchewan's first Treaty Indian judge, was featured on the cover of the second-ever edition of Eagle Feather News?

A. Gerald Morin B. Rhonda Goodbar C. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond

Answer key

1. C. Muskoday First Nation 2. A. 20,000 kids taken 3. B. \$750 million 4. B. Brigette Lacquette 5. D. Alike Lafontaine 6. B. Joely BigEagle-Kequahtoway 7. A. ~60 million people! 8. C. Krystle Pederson 9. C. Redbone 10. D. Michael Greyeyes 11. A. Colonel Otter 12. B. The

Northcote 13. C. Hanging Judge Rouleau 14. A. Chief Gordon Oakes 15. B. Floyd Favel 16. D. Delia Opekokew 17. C. Ulysses Grant 18. A. Madam Josephite Tourand 19. B. Joseph Ross 20. C. Harold R. Johnson 21. D. 2.4% 22. D. \$141 million 23. A. 1790's 24. B. Île-à-la-Crosse 25. C. Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond

Thank you for taking our annual quiz. If you got 20 or more questions correct, you are a genius or have a real strong google game. Enjoy the rest of National Indigenous Peoples History Month. For further reading, our sources for this quiz were: Loyal till Death, by Stonechild and Waiser. Saskatchewan: A New History, By Waiser. Saskatchewan First Nations, Lives Past and Present. Wikipedia.



This Muskeg Lake Cree Nation dancer and actor (on the far right), made himself a following with Dance Me Outside. (Photo Facebook)

# National Indigenous Peoples Day

## Join the Virtual Celebration

### June 21 10 a.m. to noon

For more information, scan the QR code or visit:

Regina National Indigenous Peoples Day on Facebook



# Matriarch of five generations looks back and ahead

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

At 79, Viola Dumont has lived among family members born in three centuries.

She has 27 descendents, including six great-great grandchildren and eight grandchildren who were born in the 2000s and is the matriarch of a family of five generations.

Her great grandfather, Chief Harry Atcheynum, was still alive when she was a child in the 1940s living near him on Sweetgrass First Nation. He was 15 at the time of the 1885 Battle of Batoche. His father was a signatory to Treaty 6, and lived to be 97.

Four generations of her family went to residential school.

"My grandmother, my dad, me and my daughters," she said.

Dumont went to school on Sweetgrass for the first five grades but went to residential school from grade six to eight. The priests and nuns never singled her out but when kids ran away, the nuns cut their hair short and hit them. One sister had a strap she kept in a pocket in the folds of her habit. She'd pull it out and hit a kid's hands and wouldn't stop until they cried, Dumont said.

She worked in the sewing room and kitchen.

"They'd get a big two-and-a-half-gallon pail of peanut butter. They had me put it in a kettle and mix it with lard, then cool it so the peanut butter would last longer," she said.

Dumont said she understands why many residential school survivors turned to alcohol. Though she didn't, the experience affected her.

"To show my emotions, even to hug my girls, they took that away, even though I was 13 when I went to residential school. I wasn't able to hug them and tell them that I loved them. It was hard to do."

Dumont says she worked through those issues when she took counseling courses to work with teenagers.

Dumont's mother taught her to cook, garden, can and sew clothes and she tried to pass on lessons in parenting too:

- "It's okay for them to get dirty cause kids, that's the happiest time of their life just when they're dirty, when they're playing outside."

- "Inside, they mess up their toys but you teach them to put them away too, after and ask them as they grow older, to help you."

- "Let them wash the dishes, no matter if they don't do it right, even if they spill water, that's okay if you have to do them over again. But when they want to do something, let them. That's how they learn."

- "When they do something right, you praise them, you thank them, you make them feel good and they like to do more when they know you appreci-

ate them. See that way they know that they're loved too."

*She has 27 descendents, including six great-great grandchildren and eight grandchildren who were born in the 2000s and is the matriarch of a family of five generations.*

- "I like working with the kids. Talked to them. You take them as your friend. They could talk too. When they're able to talk to you, you feel good about that. It goes both ways. Cause you treat them the way you want to be treated."

- "Food, whatever I have, I'll give it to people. I was taught that when growing up. When people stop by, even unexpectedly, give them what we have, even bannock and tea."



**Viola Dumont (sitting) with daughter Darlene Atcheynum (hat) and L to R great-grandchildren, Kristen, Tristen and Diandra, granddaughter Lisa Atcheynum and far right, great-granddaughter Savannah in 2021 (photo: Darlene Atcheynum)**

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## READ Saskatoon Annual General Meeting

Where: Online via Zoom  
When: Wednesday, June 30th, 2021  
Time: 11:30am - 1:00pm

Registration is required

Tickets available:

online: [www.READsaskatoon.com/events](http://www.READsaskatoon.com/events)

email: [info@READsaskatoon.com](mailto:info@READsaskatoon.com)



# WE'RE DIGGING INTO THE NEW CENTRAL LIBRARY'S DESIGN.

What matters to you? Tell us Jun 1–25.

The concept design for the new central library has been released and you can view exterior renderings and high-level floorplans today! The design draws inspiration from traditional First Nation and Métis architecture and Saskatoon's natural landscape.

## Phase 2: Digging Deeper Schematic Design

### Happening Now!

We're now digging deeper into the design of the library's interior, and community consultations are underway. Get involved and tell us what matters to you:

#### Join a Virtual Conversation with the Architects

Meet the architects, hear about the design and participate in a guided workshop.

Jun 13 / 3–5 pm &  
Jun 14 / 7–9 pm

#### Host a Kitchen Table Conversation

Download a Kitchen Table Kit or pick up a paper copy at any Saskatoon Public Library. Kitchen Table Kits are for a small group of friends or family to get together to talk in a comfortable setting.

#### Answer Online Surveys

There are eight surveys, each focused on different library spaces.



**SASKATOON  
CENTRAL LIBRARY**

See the new central library's concept design and join the conversation at  
[splconnect.ca](https://splconnect.ca)

# Muskowekwan FN Chief Bellerose running to lead AFN

By NC Raine  
for Eagle Feather News

Chief Reginald Bellerose is ready to take his vision and leadership to the national level.

The long time Chief of Muskowekwan First Nation recently announced his candidacy for National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), which will hold its election July 7.

Bellerose also serves as Chair of the Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority (SIGA) and the Saskatchewan Indian Training Assessment Group (SITAG).

"I've dedicated my life to working for our people, to help our people try to advance important issues," Bellerose said in an interview.

"People are looking for political stability. Political stability really matters in Indian country."

The AFN will see a new face at the helm, as Perry Bellegarde announced in December he would not run for re-election.

Bellerose is one of seven candidates for National Chief, and the only one from Saskatchewan. The others are RoseAnn Archibald (Ontario), Jodi Calahoo-Stonehouse (Alberta), Lee Crowchild (Alberta), Alvin Fiddler (Ontario), Kevin T. Hart (Manitoba), and Cathy Martin (Quebec).

Bellerose said the leader of the AFN needs to have a strong voice, and grassroots experience at the First Nations level.

"At the FSIN, with our legislative assembly and our internal system, it is good training grounds for this position, training that no post-secondary institution can give you. We have 74 First Nations that meet, and institutions like SIGA, SIIT, First Nations University all came from Chiefs around Saskatchewan sitting around a table and strategizing on how to make improvements," he said.

"When it comes to experience, navigating the day to day experiences that a Chief in Canada goes through, I would say that's what jumps out at me. If you're successful, you're going to last at it. If you're not, people are going to vote for another option. I've been Chief for sixteen and a half years."

Bellerose has outlined three key areas in his campaign for National Chief: rights and jurisdiction, economic sovereignty, and health and wellness.

Rights and jurisdiction is critical because historically, nations came together and were able to make agreements with the Crown because of inherent rights they had to land, and this same principle is relevant to all Indigenous people today, he said.

"We have a common thread throughout the country: this is the land our Cre-

ator put us on, we've been making use of it for thousands of years. As modern times came along, our rights have been eroded... people are now having to pay for medications, or being asked to prepay for dental care, to pay for rights enshrined through treaty," he said.

Bellerose said economic sovereignty is not about economic development, but about doing business through traditional economic opportunities like harvesting and living off the land.

"No government can tell us that as First Nations, we cannot live that way of life," he said.

He also wants sharper attention to the opioid epidemic and crystal meth additions that plague youth.

He said the main issue at the AFN right now is that money allocated to supporting First Nations is being tied up in bureaucracy. He wants to make sure funds are actually reaching the First Nations they are intended for.

The Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) Executive Council released a joint statement in support of Bellerose:

"He has been a dedicated and influential leader in Saskatchewan for nearly two decades," it read.

"Chief Bellerose is dedicated to the success of First Nations across all Treaty Territories and beyond. We fully support his bid and believe he would be a great fit for AFN National Chief."



**Chief Reginald Bellerose of the Muskowekwan First Nation announced his candidacy for Chief of the Assembly of First Nations with the FSIN backing him. (Photo supplied)**

Advertorial

## Your Way Together: Building Business As a Community

By Trista Pewapisconias, a proud member of Little Pine First Nation and Indigenous Relations Lead, Co-operatives First

Indigenous communities know how to work together. And this past year, there were many incredible examples as we coped with a global pandemic. But did you know that there's a business model you can use to capture that ability to collaborate and make things better? That's what a co-op does.



**Carla Antoine (L) and Waverly Antoine (R). Kookum's Kitchen. Photo supplied.**

Community co-operation and working together is not new to Indigenous people, but the co-op business structure and rules, bylaws, and terminology may be. And co-op businesses can be a great fit within Indigenous communities. But the model does require some rethinking of traditional and contemporary ways people can work together to form a business.

A co-operative is a business owned by a group of people with a common interest who make decisions together and share in the business's profits. The business owners (a.k.a. its members) have an equal say in how the co-op

operates and benefits the individual members and the entire membership.

By taking the community view of working together in both prosperous times and during hardships, building a co-operative business can help communities meet both opportunities and challenges.

Communities come together for the common good all the time. For example, during festivals or powwows, volunteers work together to bring

joy and celebrations to the community. With a shared vision, volunteers set roles and responsibilities for committees, fundraising, operations, judging, dealing with vendors, and security to make an event happen.

During the pandemic, the women of Kookum's Kitchen were concerned about how physical distancing and limiting household contacts would impact food access for elders and children. So the women volunteered to cook two meals a day for the community elders, make lunches, and deliver them to each household. The women who started Kookum's Kitchen also purchased, prepared, and delivered the food.

Likewise, communities organized parties to hunt, fish, gather, and share food with community members to feed their families when travel and shopping options were limited and discouraged.

During the recent fire outside of Prince Albert and many communities lost power, people organized BBQs to feed community members with no electricity.

With a co-operative, this energy and community involvement could inspire a community business project, build a Nation's economy, and provide opportunities for members. Plus, people create co-ops to do all kinds of wonderful things.

For example, farmers often join a co-op to pool funds, buy a piece of machinery together, and help boost community food security. Likewise, artisans form co-ops to market and sell their items together through a website or physical location. Joining a co-op gives the artists more time to create and the opportunity to build, collaborate, and supply larger markets. Sole proprietors sometimes form a co-op with other business owners to share administrative duties, like bookkeeping, marketing, and human resources. Consolidating these costs saves valuable time that they can use to serve customers better.

To learn more or get started on your co-op, visit [YourWayTogether.ca](http://YourWayTogether.ca).

# The Battle of the Iron Buffalo

It was during the winter of 1870 when a grieving Cree warrior went winter camp to winter camp calling for retaliation against their enemies, the Blackfoot Confederacy. His brother had died during battles of the season past. His grief became rage and blinded him to all else. He spoke angrily, bare chested, a buffalo robe wrapped around his waist in bitter cold. During the winter he gathered eleven pipe stems belonging to the war chiefs of eleven camps. Each was a commitment.

They gathered at the great bend of the South Saskatchewan River in late summer. Among their company were a large number of Nakotas, famed fighters and traditional allies. Some say their combined camp numbered in the hundreds, others over a thousand. As they traveled into contested land, they traveled by night and hid by day. It was north of the Cypress Hills Chief Piapot experienced a terrifying dream. He saw them attacking an enraged buffalo bull. No matter how hard they fought they could not kill it. They were instead being slaughtered. Piapot, like so many believed in the power of dreams. He told his dream and said he understood only disaster lay ahead. The angry grieving warrior insulted Piapot calling him a coward and a child afraid of dreams.

History recalls Piapot as a great warrior and a wise principal Cree Chief. He did not respond saying only he was turning back. Among those who followed was Day Star, a counselor in Piapot's camp and soon to be a Chief in his own right. Day Star is my wife's direct ancestor.

On the others went, deep into Blackfoot territory. They came upon a solitary Kahnai (Blood) camp close to what is now Lethbridge Alberta. They did not know it was an outlying camp of a very large

Confederacy encampment extending miles hidden from view along the Bull Horn Coulee a short distance away. The Cree Nakota were spurred on by the grieving warrior. His purpose was not to steal horses but to punish the Blackfoot.

They attacked, killing many. Some escaped and warned the Confederacy camp. There is a long hill extending from what is now the University of Alberta down into the valley below to where the Kahnai were encamped. The Confederacy warriors came in



## Breaking Trail

John Cuthand

twos and threes singing their war songs as they came until they covered the hill side like ants pouring out of a nest. The Cree Nakota were massacred. The Belly River ran red with their blood that terrible day. Only seven, all wounded, survived hidden among willows at the river's edge.

The grieving enraged man could not see anything else. He led his people into disaster. He too died in the fighting. Among the seven was my great grandfather Masatimwas who survived below the river by breathing through a pipe stem. Contrary to

some accounts Chief Big Bear was not present at the Battle of the Iron Buffalo.

This story is largely based on oral history. There is no written account telling the Cree Nakota's own history of the battle. First Nations have been very reluctant to admit warfare existed and so much history is one sided and distorted by colonialism.

This battle is most often called the "Battle of the Belly River." I choose to call it, perhaps by me alone, the "Battle of the Iron Buffalo." It was the last battle fought between these two enemies. They had once been on friendly terms but with the buffalo die-off, the Cree Nakota by necessity hunted into Confederacy territory. The incursion eventually evolved into open warfare.

In our time, there are some whose grief is stuck in a destructive bitterness like the warrior of old. Old stories, dusty as they may be, so often speak to life's timeless lessons. In this instance is the importance of processing grief in a healthy way. A good healing path is kept within the culture through custom and belief.

I once told this story to some young offenders. They were a rowdy bunch but settled down whenever I told old warrior stories. I usually ended telling them the sacrifice and duties of a warrior society also included enforcing First Nation law. They were the cops. This put a new spin on gangs calling themselves warriors. I also asked how many committed their crimes when they were with others. Most if not all hands shot up. I then asked how many of them could, like Chief Piapot, turn back. They were quizical but the story at least gave them something to think about.



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# Maria Campbell, not your typical Q&A

When you walk into Maria Campbell's house, it is easy to figure out she is a legend. In a row on the floor are the awards. Order of Canada. Saskatchewan Order of Merit. The Order of Gabriel Dumont. Lieutenant Governor Award. Random Honorary Doctorates. You know, the basics.

Pretty intimidating for any visitor, let alone a guy who admires her and came to ask her weird questions like, "when the last time was you laughed so hard you peed?"

But you forge on regardless because the people really want to know. Maria, the most decorated Métis person in the history of this country, has been written about endlessly and we wanted to honour her, after another couple awards were given to her in the last two months, but we decided to be a bit different. Please enjoy the conversation we had. We certainly did.

## What was the first ghost you ever met? Where were you?

I was at Fort San, that was the first ghost I had ever had conversations with. I was going to bed and my late husband was asleep already. This person kept coming to my bed and she was crying, at first, I thought I was imagining it, so I opened a pack of cigarettes. Honest to God at 4:30 in the morning I had smoked all of my cigarettes because I had been listening to her all night. She told me this amazing story about all these people being in that wing of this place, I didn't know it was a hospital. She kept talking about this area and I saw her life story, her telling me almost like looking at a film, the story went through different genres, sometimes I would see it as a film or hear it with my ears or she was sitting beside me. She came in at about 6 years old her parents left her and she never went home again. She lived there until she died, she had a baby and an affair in there. She was experimented on and most of the story was about people getting experimented on in that hospital. I felt incredible empathy for her. My husband woke up at 4 in the morning and sat up and said what the hell is going on in here. I started to say something, and she disappeared. I started to tell my husband what had happened and he didn't pay any attention. We got up in the morning and went into the lobby we didn't know which way to go and there was a woman in the window and I told my husband we should ask her where to go. She said she would take us to where we needed to go, and I said something to my husband and we looked behind us and she was gone.

## You lived at Gabriel Crossing for years. Did you really meet the spirit of Gabriel Dumont? What's he like?

Before I had moved into my house, we were cleaning it and I decided to stay a night in the house on a cot. I woke up at about 2 in the morning and there was a man sitting by the kitchen window, a bearded man. I thought it was my late husband's brother or my older brother but then I realized it was neither one of them. I sat up and it smiled at me, and he said it looks really nice here. We had done a lot of work over the year, and he was really pleased with it. It was what he communicated to me. About two years later my daughter was babysitting and we were at Batoche days. We came home and she was sitting in her bedroom at 2 o'clock in the morning. She

asked if we had seen anyone outside and I said no there is nobody outside and she said there's some people drinking at the river, which would happen during Batoche days. She got really scared because they were pretty loud and close to the house. She got up in the dark and walked to the window to see what was going on. She said she saw a man come around the corner, a big man with a beard and his hair tied back. He came around the corner and stood in front of the house and turned and smiled at her and she said she wasn't scared anymore. John Cuthand and Harvey Knight also saw him. They were waiting for another guy who was going to stay in the tepee with them.

Same thing happened. This bearded man came in. They were sleeping, he walked in between them and squatted down at their feet and had a smoke. They thought it was the guy coming to visit, but then John realized that's not who it was and he got spooked. In the morning he wasn't there. They both swore they saw him. He was friendly. This was almost 48 years ago.

## What was your favourite thing to do at the Crossing?

I loved going out there in the spring and cleaning the yard and fixing everything because the sand hill cranes are coming home, and the geese, it just sounds so beautiful out there. The frogs are all singing.

## What is the scariest thing that ever happened to you?

The scariest thing that has ever happened is that somebody, who I won't name because lots of people know them, but myself and two other women stayed at a house one time, a new log cabin that was finished and the man was a psychopath. There was windows all the way around this little cabin. We gave him a ride home and he had a gun, and we were inside, and he went and told us not to leave it and we sat inside for two nights in that cabin. And at night we didn't know if he was outside or where he was. All we knew is that he had a gun, and it was dark outside, there was no curtains, and we were inside with a light and there was no place to get away from him. That was really scary.

## Tell me about a time you peed your pants laughing.

Louis Halfe's new book, but I didn't really pee my pants but I just about did, cause it's a really funny book. Especially if you're a Cree speaker.

## Who wins a fist fight between Pierre Elliot Trudeau and Jimmy Sinclair?

I don't think there would've been a fight. I think because both of them liked to talk and I think they probably would have ended up with a war of words.

## You fist fight Margaret Attwood. Who wins?

I'm sure she would win. I can't even imagine having a fist fight with Margaret Attwood.



**Maria Campbell in her office, overflowing with books and art. Here she is still working on four books, two children's books, and multiple other projects. She insists she will work until her mind goes. (Photo by John Lagimodiere)**



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**Favourite hockey team?**

I haven't watched hockey since Freddy Sasakamoose stopped playing hockey. I would've cheered for his team, because I didn't really know much about hockey. But we were all related to him so we would cheer as loud as we could. Freddy was my favorite player, then Jimmy Neilson.

**Who is your favourite politician?**

I liked Pierre Elliot Trudeau. I liked him because he was very witty and really smart in a quirky way. My favorite Indigenous politician was probably Howard Adams, I didn't particularly like him that much but I thought he had a really brilliant political mind.

**Favourite book?**

My very favorite book was a book I read when I was about 28 or 30, somewhere around there. It was about A Place called Fanshen, a thousand years of history in a Chinese village. It was incredible. It showed how entrenched a culture can be and a people can be and a language can be.

**Who is the most formidable woman you have ever met?**

Alanis Obomsawin

**Winter, spring, summer, or fall?**

I love the fall.

**Favourite colour?**

Black

**What makes you maddest?**

What makes me the maddest is the way we treat children.

**Who is your celebrity crush?**

My celebrity crush, I don't think I have one but I love opera. I love Pavarotti's voice

**If you could go back to any time in history and have soup and a conversation with anyone, who would it be and why?**

I would love to have a conversation with Louis Riel because he had such an amazing life. We don't know anything about his life, we only know that he was hanged and that he was our leader. What we know about him is so superficial when he had such an amazing life, and his interests were so amazing and you look at what was happening in the world when he was alive and what would have shaped his thinking. He was an artist and he studied law, he was such a world citizen and for those things people said he was crazy.

**Ever get road rage?**

Ya sometimes I do, I hardly drive anymore but I used to roll my window down and ask what's wrong with you guys.

**Longest hitch hike?**

The longest I have hitch hiked was from Vancouver to Winnipeg when I was about nineteen.

**Ever vote twice in a Métis election?**

No. I have only ever voted twice in those elections. I was mostly working them. Never really voted. And remember in the last number of years I never had a membership. I just never found it such a big deal.

**Favourite vehicle ever?**

My favorite vehicle is a Volvo.

**Person who you met who was the most awe inspiring?**

Buffy Saint Marie, when she first started to sing, I didn't know a whole lot about her.

**Most famous person you met ever?**

Prince Charles. I didn't bow, but I did say hello.

**When is Maria happiest?**

When I'm with all my kids and grandkids and we're having dinner together or doing stuff together.

**Turing on the TV to watch your favourite show. What is it?**

I love really soppy, British historical stuff like Downton Abbey.

**What is your favourite TV snack?**

I love eating cold fish and Bannock.

**Best movie ever?**

I still love this one movie; it was about the 30's and it was this family from Arkansas going to California. It's a very famous one but I can't remember the name of it. (Grapes of Wrath)

**What is one food you would never eat?**

Crocodile or snake, reptiles I could never eat.

**Favourite food?**

Roasted wild Pickerel or moose. I'm a meat eater.

**McDonalds or Burger King?**

Neither

**What was the hardest thing you ever did?**

The hardest thing I ever did was build my dad's casket. And that was hard, but he wanted me to build it for him. I cried through it and I laughed. I built it at the crossing, and it took me two days to do it and I painted it, cause he told me to paint it. He didn't want it to be just wood. He loved the colour fireweed so I painted it then added some flowers like flower beadwork. And I looked at it and it was gaudy, and I could hear my dad say beside me, "my girl, it's a bit bright" in Cree. I started to laugh cause I was thinking that too....so I took some flowers off and toned it down. I laughed so hard when he said that, that I was okay after that. My dad really prepared us for when he was going to die.

**Back in the day you are sitting having a drink and a smoke. What's your poison?**

I really liked Jack Daniels and scotch, I could never really afford good scotch, so Jack Daniels was the next best thing. I smoked Du Maurier for years.

**Do you ever feel the pressure of being the "Maria Campbell"?**

No because I'm not really Maria Campbell, whatever that's supposed to mean. I don't really think about it. I have lots of people come talk to me if I'm out but they're very kind so it's not like I'm a celebrity or anything, I'm treated very respectfully. Even if people are a little over the top, I owe it to them, I wouldn't have what I have if it wasn't for them. We don't get things because we do it. It's because of a whole lot of other people who help and support over the years.

**You have been honoured or awarded so many times...which is the most meaningful?**

The Order of Gabriel Dumont. It's closest to me, my heritage. Those are my family. Everybody was related and I live in that place, that history is my history. He's my hero of all Hero's, I love Riel, but I don't think of him in the same hero way I think of Gabriel. Gabriel is amazing, he was uneducated in western ways, but he was brilliant. And just the kind of man and leader he was. He didn't try to take leadership away from Riel, he supported and recognized that Riel had what he needed. He gave him the stuff that Riel didn't have. They had a real equal relationship.

**What do you foresee for the generation of Indigenous children just being born?**

Twenty years from now, they're coming into the world; the world will be different. Their parents are going to be my great-grandchildren's generation, my youngest great grandchild is 5 and the oldest is 13. The five-year-old is so technically savvy, she can fix my computer for me. She's bright, she's smart and fearless. She gets scared but didn't grow up with the kind of fear that I grew up with. I grew up in the generation where that was the boss and if you took him on be prepared to maybe get killed (metaphorically). You just didn't talk like that to people in positions of power. That little girl won't have fear with many things. Her generation won't have to face many things I had to, such as systemic racism, it's still around but not as bad.

**How do you do all that you have done? What's the secret?**

I don't have a secret, I just work. I haven't done things other people haven't done. Look at what you have done. You have a paper and are involved in all of these things...how do you have time to do it? All of us have done things in different ways I just happen to be lucky. I get all these kinds of awards but I never for one minute ever think I'm getting those awards because I'm wonderful and I've done anything extraordinary because there are other people who have done more. For me I became well known at an earlier time and knowing our society, if you are giving an award, and in this day and age you have to give them to an Indigenous person, and who comes to mind and who might give you the most PR? That's what the world is about. And that sounds really jaded and awful but I would say 70 per cent of that is true. I know from sitting around with people and we hope to do something, we want to get the most high-profile person to draw the people in. Why would you give it to someone that nobody knows? I think all of us work hard, I know people who do more than me, more community things. But with this comes lots of responsibility. I certainly haven't been this great person that did all these wonderful things all of a sudden. I've had a long life and able to accomplish a lot of work.



**Maria back when she created and hosted the Métis Ball. (Photo by John Lagimodiere)**

# Public Indigenous art reflects people, place, history

By NC Raine  
for Eagle Feather News

Along 21st Street in downtown Saskatoon, two historically significant medals have been installed along the street on pre-existing bike racks.

The Treaty No. 6 Medal depicts mutual respect and balance between the Crown and First Nations people during its signing in 1876 and the Homeland of Métis Medal, has a bison, Métis sash, and Red River cart representing the history of Métis people prior to the establishment of Saskatoon.

The public art displays, created in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, are part of the City of Saskatoon effort to install art to be encountered in everyday life.

"You're starting to see more of this type of art across Canada and North America, which people call 'functional art.' It's an opportunity for there to be more public art, moving away from the traditional sculpture-on-a-plinth," said Kevin Kitchen, Manager of Community Development for the City.

"You don't have to go out of your way to find these things, so in some ways it's more powerful and effective."

Forty medals were installed on the bike racks in April. The city worked with Elders Harry Lafond and Nora Cummings, the Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Centre and Gabriel Dumont Institute to provide historical context for the medals, which is posted on signs along 21st Street.

"We want the city to be a place where Indigenous people feel included, and where their identity, history, and culture is reflected. One of the ways we can do that is through art," said Melissa Cote, Director of Indigenous Initiatives at the City of Saskatoon.

The medals are part of a recent influx in Indigenous-created public art around the city, as a result of the City prioritizing diversity and engaging the community members' voices when commissioning new public art.

Some of the public art in recent years around Saskatoon by Indigenous artists include: Miyawatam/Saadat Qalbi (Downtown/Broadway/Riversdale) by Ruth Cuthand and Suada Jailan; Red Star Woman (Police Station) by Lionel Peyachiew; River and Sky (Broadway) by Tony Stallard, Joseph Naytohow, and Kenn T. Williams; Land of Berries (Remai Arts Centre) by Stallard, Naytohow, and Joy Arcand; and Chief Whitecap (Chief Whitecap Park) by Lloyd Pinay.

These join more long-time, familiar pieces from Indigenous artists around the city like The Bison are Coming Home (Sutherland Hall) by Andre Gowan, and The Spirit of the Alliance (River Landing) by Adrian Stimson, Happy Grove, and JS Gauthier.

"The art is for creating discussions, and providing people with an opportunity to reflect on the history, the culture, and what it means to the city itself," said Cote.

According to feedback from the public in 2015, Saskatoon's public art was also sorely lacking colour. Curator Dr. Jen Budney, under Saskatoon's 2020 Place-maker Project, commissioned Ruth Cuthand and Suada Jailan to create vibrant works for three prominent locations in Saskatoon. The collaboration brought Cuthand, an established Cree artist, with Jailan, a young henna artist from Somalia, who grew up as a refugee in Kenya.

Together, Cuthand and Jailan created the series Miyawatam/Saadat Qalbi – roughly translates to "they are joyful" – hand painted aluminum sculptures composed of floral motifs inspired by Cree/Michif beadwork and East African henna design.

"When the two of us got together, we started to think about how we could bring our art together. As she was showing me her henna designs, I thought, 'These would look beautiful with floral beadwork,'" said Cuthand.

The two pieces installed so far, one on 20 Street and another on Second Avenue, have elicited positive reactions.

"People were coming down and saying, 'Wow, is that ever nice!' One woman said 'Are those flowers for me?' I really liked to hear the response to the art," said Cuthand.

"If you look around the city, there's very little Indigenous, or other cultures', work out there. So for me, what really drove it was, one would be on 20th Street. I saw it as an opportunity to show inner city people that they were recognized and mattered in Riversdale," she said.

Perhaps one of Saskatoon's most striking public art pieces, both in scale and historical significance, is The Spirit of the Alliance, a cluster of figures within a tepee shape, recognizing the War of 1812 and the historical alliance between Dakota Chief Wabasha and Colonel Robert Dickson.

"(The monument) has become a gathering point for people, to celebrate, or to protest. It's delightful to see a piece of work evolve over time. While it has a strong meaning and history to it, people can bring their own ideas to it," said artist Adrian Stimson, member of Siksika Nation in Alberta.

Stimson said that historically, Indigenous art has been absent from the public realm. The more Indigenous art, culture and perspectives are reflected in our cities, the more Canada will understand its deep history with Indigenous people, he said.

"Like all art, the role of public art is to be a trigger. For people to not only wonder, or have curiosity as to what it is, but to also remind them of our history and enliven the community it's placed in," he said.

"Public art needs to be a strong element in the fabric of any city, town, province, or country, because it really is a reflection of themselves."



**Treaty No.6 Medal and Homeland of the Métis Medals placed among bike racks on 21st Street in Saskatoon. (Photo supplied)**



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## Pandemic highlights importance of Indigenous community radio

By INCA Staff  
for Eagle Feather News

Robert Merasty got his start in radio 40 years ago, doing Cree and Michif broadcasts for trappers and fishermen in northern Saskatchewan, and he was one of the founders of MBC in 1983; but he had to learn new skills to keep his community informed during the pandemic.

Homes across northern Saskatchewan have one thing in common--the radio is always on. During the pandemic, radio announcers provided updates, translated medical information, addressed misinformation, and helped Elders stay happy and safe.

Merasty works at CILX in his home community of Île à la Crosse, a Métis village with about 1,500 people, 700 kilometres northwest of Saskatoon. CILX is one of 70 community radio stations on the Missinipi (MBC) network, which broadcast in Cree, Michif and Dene.

Merasty remembers one day early in the pandemic, the sunlight was hitting his microphone and he realized that he spits when he talks. Now he cleans all the equipment in the studio before he leaves.

Interviews have to be done over the phone, so he can't read body language. And he can't videotape the interviews for programs that were posted on the ICSI cable channel, Facebook and YouTube. "That was the best part of this whole job," he said.

Merasty joined the community's emergency response team. Every morning at 11, he takes off his headphones and plays music while he gets updates from the team of medical experts and community leaders. "I explain them all in English, Cree and Michif."

Merasty responds to misinformation respectfully. "I say, 'Ignore those comments and go to a proper source, like the Saskatchewan Health Authority or the clinic and don't listen to people that are unreliable sources.'"

In Île à la Crosse, most Elders have limited English, so they need information in their languages.

"If you understand English it's okay," said 86-year-old Eliza Aubichon, who is a Kokum to everyone in Île à la Crosse. "But if you don't understand English,



**Robert Merasty broadcasts on CILX in his home community of Île à la Crosse. CILX is one of 70 community radio stations on the Missinipi (MBC) network, which broadcast in Cree, Michif and Dene. (Photo by Brook Favel)**

then it's no use to talk to somebody when they don't understand."

Even though Merasty is fluent in Cree, Michif and English, translating COVID terms is challenging. First he Googles, then, "We talk to Elders to get them to explain what they think...and how they would explain it."

"Robert knows what to say," said Elder Aubichon. "No matter if he makes a little bit mistakes now and then. That don't matter. He repeats himself again and he tells us."

Hearing Merasty on radio is reassuring for Elders whose children and grandchildren haven't been able to visit. "They get lonely and (when) we hear somebody talk Cree, we're happy. It wakes us up," said Elder Aubichon.

In many communities, the radio stations held fund-raisers to help families affected by COVID. Merasty remembers that in one auction, a jar of homemade jam sold for \$50.

As he closes in on his 70th birthday, Merasty wants to hand his microphone to someone who can keep speaking their language on radio. "Language played a major role for me doing what I love to do."

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**Saskatchewan** 

# Award winning heating system solves mould, health issues for Starblanket family

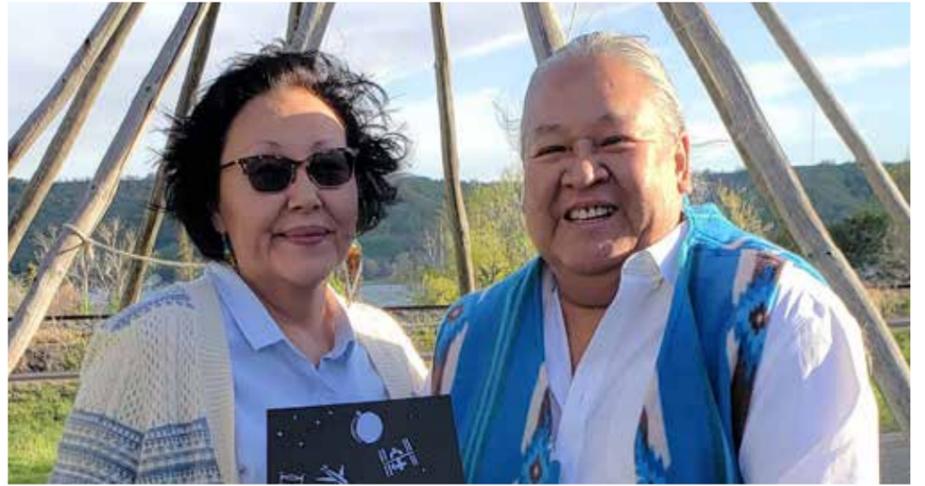
By Melanie McKay  
for Eagle Feather News

When Wendal Starblanket saw that his wife couldn't spend 24 hours in their home without experiencing headaches and breathing issues, he decided to find a solution for the mould in their house on Starblanket Cree Nation.

More than two years later, a modified heating system add-on called Blanket of Warmth, designed to improve air quality and provide radiant heating for their home and his brother's, has won engineering and green building technical awards.

"An interesting thing is my wife's breathing improved, my breathing improved, her allergies went away, her headaches went away; prior to us having radiant link we used to wonder why she was getting headaches and couldn't stay in the house for 24 hours, I'd have to take her out to get fresh air. Once we put the radiant link in we can stay in the house now, there's no more mould, there's no more heavy breathing," Starblanket said.

In his quest to improve his family's living conditions, Starblanket talked with an acquaintance, Aura Lee MacPherson of MacPherson Engineering, and



Sonia and Wendel Starblanket pictured holding the Association of Professional Engineers/Geoscientists of Saskatchewan (APEGS) Blanket of Warmth Project Award (photos Sonia Starblanket)

The Blanket of Warmth Project received a Provincial Association of Professional Engineers/ Geoscientists of Saskatchewan (APEGS) Exceptional Engineering Award and a national Sustainable Architecture and Building magazine- Canadian Green Building Technical Award.

Starblanket hopes more homes will adopt the system and said, "Just the two of us have it so far but our goal is to have at least one system in every First Nation across the country."

"We hope that this can warm all the people and warm their homes and hearts and keep their home fires burning brightly and that was the initial idea."

Questions about the system can be directed to Lynda Bigknife-Red Dog Limited, the economic arm of Starblanket First Nation. 306-331-8480.



Wendel Starblanket and Murdoch MacPherson, MacPherson Engineering pictured with the national Sustainable Architecture and Building magazine Canadian Green Building Technical Award (photos Sonia Starblanket)

together they assembled a team that worked to address the issue of poor air quality and dampness in First Nations homes. Starblanket spoke with elders and community members and ensured protocols were followed and ceremony was held before the project began, while MacPherson invited industry partners to participate.

Responsible energy consumption and clean production were important principles for the design, Starblanket said.

MacPherson, who was the award recipient, said, "I really think the beauty of this project was using the principles of the tipi, being respectful of the United Nation's 17 Sustainable Development Goals and looking for industry partners to try and solve a problem."

She highlights the team effort, collaborative approach and Indigenous knowledge-based inspirational design. "We really want to create conversations and we want to set people up for success and not failure," she said. She hopes the project gets people talking about better indoor air quality and heating and hopes for future expansion.

The team also included the United Nation Regional Center of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development, the University of Regina Industrial Systems capstone engineering students, Uponor plumbing and heating, Fries Tallman Lumber, Anaquod Plumbing and Heating and Creative Spaces.

Incorporating Indigenous knowledge to create the solution, the system not only improves indoor air quality, it reduces the risk of fire and is energy efficient, MacPherson said. The Blanket of Warmth Project is considered a design solution to the substandard indoor environmental quality in many homes across the country, she said.

# Elder's memoirs published in Cree and English

By Julia Peterson  
for Eagle Feather News

Ted Whitecalf remembers his mother, Sarah Whitecalf, as a woman who was "Cree first, in everything that she did."

Sarah's stories and memoirs have been collected in *mitoni niya nêhiyaw / Cree is who I truly am; nêhiyaw-iskwêw mitoni niya / me, I am truly a Cree woman*, a new book published by the University of Manitoba Press.

Whitecalf says the title captures his mother's approach to every part of her life.

"She lived that traditional life: medicines, right eating, feasting, sun dances and all of that," he said. "She was totally that. That's why you say, 'Cree is who I truly am.' It's right at the core of it."

The book contains stories Sarah recorded before her death in 1991 in collaboration with Freda Ahenakew, founding Director of the Saskatchewan Indian Languages Institute, according to the publisher's website.

"These are the stories that my mom recorded - the times she had growing up, the different things she learned, the stories she witnessed," said Ted. "It's a good memory for me to have of her, too, because she was such a real storyteller. She'd be talking about these stories, and she'd be right into it."

"There are some really good words in there, and they're inspirational."

Sarah, who spent most of her life on the Sweetgrass Reserve on the North Saskatchewan River, spoke Cree almost exclusively. Ted says his mother's love for her language was integral to her storytelling.

"There is such a big difference when she tried to tell a story in English and when she told it in Cree," he said. "The Cree would make such a big difference, because you feel alive in it. And how can you possibly do that in English? She would laugh and talk with her hands and mix in some of the facts as she went along."

The book is an important way of preserving his mother's language, knowledge and traditions, he said.

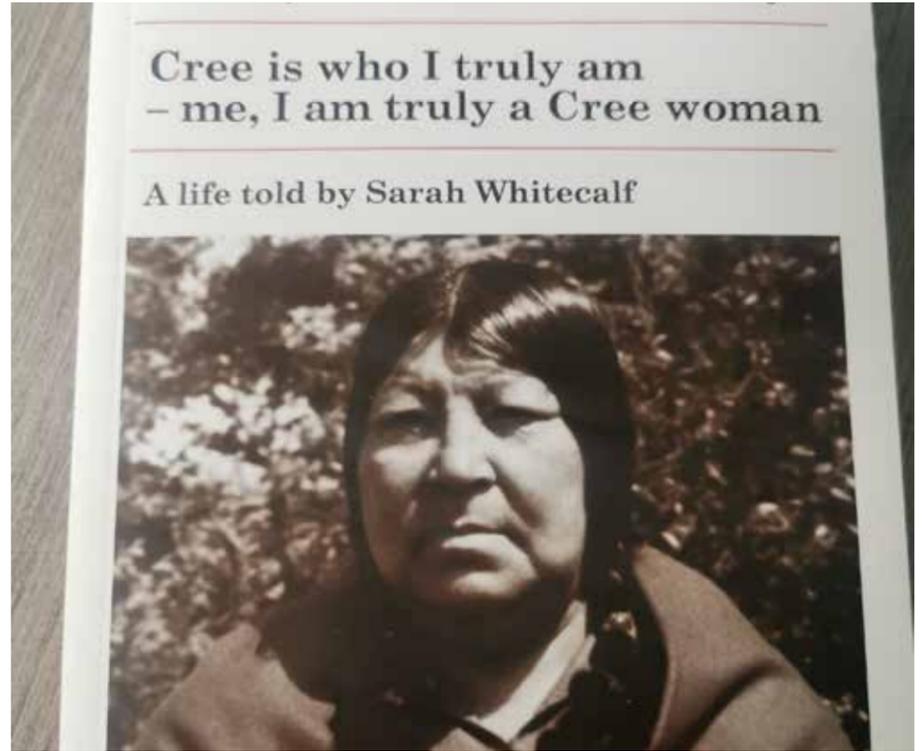
"She was very respected because of her deep, traditional ways that she was brought up, along with the Cree language that she brought forth and used - which is very nice, because those are really high Cree words that she uses, and so it's great to have her words out there for people to read and linguists to use and not forget," he said.

*"She lived that traditional life: medicines, right eating, feasting, sun dances and all of that," he said. "She was totally that. That's why you say, 'Cree is who I truly am.' It's right at the core of it."*

Since the book was published earlier this year - in Cree, with English translations on the opposite page - Ted says Sarah's family members and those who loved her have been recapturing their best memories of her through the stories on the page.

And he believes his mother would be proud to see her stories helping to energize a new generation of Cree language speakers.

"I think she would be very happy that the spirit of her words have come forth to reality in a book like this," he said. "And I think she would be happy to know that we were at the edge of losing our language and now it has come to flourish, and she played a role in that."



Sarah Whitecalf was Cree first, according to her son Ted. Her words and love for language have been captured in "Cree is who I truly am-me, I am truly a Cree Woman". (Photo submitted)



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## New MN-S VP LeClair, re-elected Pres McCallum differ on issues

By NC Raine  
for Eagle Feather News

Glen McCallum has a clear vision for the next four years.

"In the four years we've been here, we've nurtured agreements with the federal government – mainly housing, economic development, Métis child and family (services), and education," said McCallum.

"In our next four years, it's all about the structure of our government in regards to... constitutional reform, judicial council should be higher on the agenda, and the same with the Northwest Land Claim."

Voters in the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan's (MN-S) May 29 election returned two incumbents, President Glen McCallum over challenger Clem Chartier, and Secretary Lisa McCallum and ushered in a new Vice-President, lawyer Michelle LeClair and Treasurer, John Robert LaFontaine.

"I ran on improving the self government agreement and giving back the voice

to our people, and I'm committed to fulfilling those promises," said LeClair.

"I think the electorate wants change. We've seen so many communities disenfranchised, our locals being ignored, our people's voices being ignored," she said.

Despite member registration numbers being the highest in MN-S history, currently around 18,400, the 2021 General Election saw fewer voters turn out than in 2017. LeClair said on election day, she heard many people were either turned away due to not having a valid sticker on their health card, or weren't aware of where to vote.

McCallum isn't troubled by the low numbers, saying new members don't necessarily translate to new voters.

"We've never passed 3,000 members and now we're at 18,400. Not all 18,400 are going to come out and vote right off the bat. It's so new, in regards to what we're doing. We're fine tuning what we're doing but at least we're registering our people. That's the thing I look at."

He also said working with



**Glen McCallum was easily re-elected as President of the MN-S. He pledged to continue to work with the existing structures to create unity. (Photo EFN archive)**

First Nations and non-Indigenous governments will be a priority in the next four years.

"We make a better Saskatchewan when Métis and First Nations work together in government, as well as non-Aboriginal people work together."

But McCallum said unifying the often contentious relationship between the Executive Council and the Regional Directors of the Provincial Métis Council is not his job, nor is it in his disposition to be optimistic about communication being constructive.

"It's not up to me to unify anybody. It's our structure that will unify everyone. If one side has an agenda, they only have one vote. I only have one vote. The only way you can change things is if you have the majority," he said.

"I don't base my things on being optimistic. I base them on being part of the Métis Nation. I only have four years to do the things that I need to do, and that's what I focus on. I'm a realist."

LeClair, though, would like to see a stronger relationship between the Executive and Regional Directors.

"My platform was on finding common ground and growing our Nation together. Métis are passionate about our people and communities, and sometimes we lose sight of the fact that we're fighting for the same thing," she said.

"We have a strong foundation. We just have to build upon it. We are divided right now, but we have to communicate to find the best way forward. We are stronger together and I believe we can get there again."

McCallum said he anticipates the long-awaited traditional harvesting agreement to be signed with the Province by mid-summer. He said MN-S has been having "active" conversations with the provincial government, following up on a memorandum of understanding that was signed in December 2019 committing to future negotiations recognizing Métis peoples' rights to hunt and fish.

### Role of MN-S in GDI debated

One of the hotly debated issues during the election was the role of MN-S within

its affiliate, Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI). Allegations arose of the MN-S overstepping its boundaries in GDI operations by having an appointed Minister take an active role in the governance of the organization. It was also alleged that GDI played a political role in the election by only inviting certain candidates to a political debate.

McCallum defends the activity.

"Every one of those affiliates that are under the Métis Nation have used the Métis Nation to get funding. Now that we have transparency and accountability in building our structure, and have signed those agreements with the federal government that we are a Métis government, and that there's only three distinct groups in Canada, so they have to look at themselves as to who they are, why did they get the funding, under what circumstance did they get funding. If you have a government that you represent, you have an obligation to that government, to be part of that government," McCallum said.

"There's a lot of work to do in order to mend the things that need to be mended as far as animosity between governments and affiliates. That'll happen, we're going to work on it."

"The only thing I see that is 'arms length' from our government is the registry, where it should be independent itself but under the umbrella of the Métis Nation. If you have a minister of education, I'm pretty sure they're not going to isolate themselves from that department, but rather work together with the government to be able to sit together as a caucus and compare notes as to what is the best way moving forward and that's what we'll do too with the Métis Nation."

LeClair argues that GDI has positioned itself with its affiliates in ways that other governments would find inappropriate.

"In the Jim Sinclair years, when they started GDI and fought hard to get these affiliates in place, they had the foresight to say, 'these are institutions that are going to work to educate our people, we don't want to have a political organization involved with an affiliate who is doing all these wonderful things,'" said LeClair.

"They had the foresight to say, 'no we are not going to look at GDI as a political affiliate arm. We are going to say GDI is arm's length away so they can do the business that they do. What's been happening the last few years, we've heard Glen McCallum say, 'we want all the affiliates to be sort of government departments of our organization' and that's wrong."

"It would be like the Government of Saskatchewan saying, 'we're not going to have school boards, we're just going to run education the way we want to.' It would be like Premier Scott Moe taking over the University of Saskatchewan. It's the same thing here."

"If we want to have strong governance structures, we have to have frameworks and governance structures that guide those affiliates by funding them or assisting them in negotiation, but I don't think we should be going to GDI and saying, 'hey we're going to have a board meeting here today, CEO come into my office.' That's not how it works."

"GDI hasn't put themselves in the middle of this, it's the governance structure of the Métis Nation that has put GDI into it."

"The Métis Nation-Saskatchewan appoint these ministers... and that's fine, but you can't have the ministers running the organization."

### McCallum nonchalant about MNC

This year will also bring a general election for the Métis National Council (MNC). McCallum, as one of five members of the board of governors, said he is not sure what is going on with the MNC, as it has been more than two years since a meeting was called.

"If you were to ask me anything that's going on there, I wouldn't know. I'm concerned with what's going on in Saskatchewan," he said.

"I'm prepared to go to the national level and address the issues we supposedly have. I'll do my best to work with all the provinces to be able to get the best result of all Métis."



**Michelle LeClair defeated incumbent Gerald Morin for the Vice President position. She wants to unite the executive and regional directors. (Photo supplied)**



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To ensure everyone's health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic, Sask Polytech is celebrating the heritage, cultures and outstanding achievements of our Indigenous students, faculty and staff virtually on June 21, 2021.

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[saskpolytech.ca/Indigenous](https://saskpolytech.ca/Indigenous)