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Cree Métis filmmaker featured @TIFF

Danis Goulet on the red carpet at TIFF with her daughter Riel on left and son Cassius on right. (Photo supplied)

By Rose Mansbridge-Goldie
of Eagle Feather News

Danis Goulet, a nehiyawak-Métis filmmaker from La Ronge, unveiled her new project, *Night Raiders*, in September at one of the largest movie showcases in the world, the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF).

“Both of my parents, Keith and Linda Goulet, and my kids were with me at the TIFF screening. The film was given a gala presentation so we were in this super fancy theatre—Roy Thompson Hall. It was crazy to see it in such an incredible space,” Goulet said in a recent interview.

Taika Waititi, an Oscar-winning New Zealand screenwriter, actor and director, joined Goulet’s project as executive producer to help the film gain footing.

Goulet’s film has a mainly Indigenous cast.

“They are all stars in my mind, but according to the Hollywood star system they’re not “sellable names,” so when Taika came on board it really helped open doors for us,” she said.

The film stars Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers (*The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open*, *Blood Quantum*), Brooklyn Letexier-Hart (*Burden of Truth*), Alex Tarrant (*Seachange*, *When We Go to War*), Shaun Sipos (*Krypton*, *Dark Matter*), and Emmy and Tony Award-winning Amanda Plummer (*Hunger Games*, *Pulp Fiction*).

Goulet hinted that the film has some La Ronge references in it and that her hometown, along with several other communities, will get special screenings brought to them when it opens in theatres October 8.

“I can’t wait for everyone to see it, especially the prairies,” she said.

continued page 2



JOHN DESJARLAIS

Paving a Greater Impact

“There’s that strong sense in us. We want our relationships to be good, we want them to be fruitful for everyone. That sense of community and kinship. It’s the basis of our treaty relations: to live harmoniously and prosper together.”

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CASSIDY CARON

1st Female MNC President

“I hope this monumental change is inspiring to others. I can’t wait to continue creating space for more young people, more Métis women, more gender diverse folks. We are stronger together...”

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Reconciliation Ally: OTC ARCHIVES Now and Forever Allies

Documenting Chiefs’ Treaty medals is one of the research priorities for the Office of the Treaty Commissioner. As part of this research, Treaty Commissioner Mary Culbertson and her staff were invited to collaborate with Elders at Kinistin First Nation.

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October 2021 is our
Role Models Issue

November Issue:
Veterans / Remembrance Day

La Ronge Cree-Métis filmmaker joins big screen notables at TIFF

... continued from page 1

Her dad, Keith, was the main Cree language consultant for Night Raiders and plays a Cree Elder in the film.

"I involve my dad in all of my projects— I don't speak Cree as a first language but he can think in Cree and come at everything from that perspective."

One of Goulet's first gigs in the film industry was working on a TV show in Toronto where she was asked to cast a Pocahontas-type role.

"The opening scene of the pilot episode had an 'Indian princess' stand silently over a waterfall and sacrifice herself by jumping over it. The casting director called all these incredibly talented Indigenous women into the room



Danis Goulet, centre wearing an outfit designed by Sage Paul from English River First Nation, with her friends and dad Keith and mom Linda beside her at TIFF. (Photo supplied)

and I watched them 'die' over and over again—silence, not even given a line. That was their value to the whole show."

She quit working on the TV show and went to film school to learn how to direct. Since then, Goulet has written and directed three short films—Wapawekka (2010), Barefoot (2012) and Wakening (2013).

"I didn't even know if I could be a director, I just knew it had to happen—I remember thinking, 'We have to tell our own stories.'"

Night Raiders is Goulet's first feature-length film. It explores a post-war

world in which Indigenous children are put in State Academies where they're forced to give up their Indigenous identities.

The film is an eerie, futuristic reimagining of residential schools and the "timeless quality" of Indigenous peoples' survival.

"To acknowledge that we've always been here and that we're still here is so powerful, and to go into the future is saying, 'we will always be here,'" Goulet said.

"The resistance comes from a place of love for our languages and our communities."

Despite a busy summer, Goulet spent time at her family's cabin on Wapawekka Lake as she's done since she was a kid.

"I have so many memories of being out there and my dad teaching us how to harvest medicines from the lake and pick berries—I even shot my first grouse there."

Filmmaking is a way to tell these kinds of stories about culture and memory, something Indigenous peoples have been excluded from in the film industry, she said. In Saskatchewan, without a tax credit for film, that silence has been even louder.

"We're coming into a really exciting time, but it's taken years of work and so many filmmakers missed opportunities because the industry wasn't open to them," she said.

Goulet was thinking of Indigenous audiences when she made Night Raiders.

"I really wanted to make it for us first and I'm really happy if the rest of the world likes it as well—but I can't wait to take it home."



Danis Goulet (left) on set with actor Violet Nelson. (Photo submitted by Danis Goulet)

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Wasacase shapes Indigenous television productions

By NC Raine
for Eagle Feather News

Dawn Wasacase is a creative soul who looks for the beauty in everything and finds ways of translating subtle and elusive moments of beauty to audiences.

"I've always had attention for the details that resonate with people. For whatever environment you're in, see the beauty present in that," she said.

Wasacase's medium for creative expressions is visual – she's a television and events producer, a production designer and educator. Her experience runs vast, from producing corporate video to nationally broadcast Indigenous-centred content. It's in that connection to culture where her passion lies.

"That cultural content has the most meaning – no matter your own cultural grounding, when you experience cultural elements that are not your own, it opens your heart and mind to the world, and to others," she said.

Wasacase, from Kahkewistahaw First Nation, said she grew up poor but the limitations fostered creativity. Her family made use of everything and her mother recognized early on that Dawn had a gift for seeing the possibilities in everything, she said.

After earning an Education degree at the University of Saskatchewan, Wasacase worked as a teacher, then a curriculum writer with the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations. Her career took a new path after she got a gig with the Indspire Awards show as a cast wrangler – someone who ensures the on-screen talent is where they need to be and on-time. Management at Indspire recognized her gift for leading others and made her Head Talent Coordinator, where she was responsible each year for training 20 young minds for a career in the production world.

"They knew I could provide a safe space for them to learn. It is important for these young people to feel comfortable, ask question, understand what it's like to be in the production world, so they can be part of the bigger success," she said.

Besides motivating young creatives starting out in the industry, Wasacase has found her own success in creative productions, including on the production team at the Juno Awards, and crafting scenes broadcast on CBC and



Dawn Wasacase, producer and educator, was one of the creative minds behind the national broadcasts for the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. (Photo by Hannah Lemieux)

APTN for the 2021 National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

"I always say to the youth, pay attention to opportunities around you. Don't dismiss people. You've met them for a reason, you just might not yet understand why," she said.

"Be open. When you allow yourself to be open, the creativity just floods in."

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PUBLISHERS NOTES

One of the benefits of a career in the media is getting to meet a multitude of impressive people from all walks of life. I met Brian Gallagher early in my career. He's impressive. His role as Indigenous Student Advisor at the SIAST Kelsey Campus (now Polytechnic) is pivotal to the success of thousands of Indigenous students. It was always nice to visit in the crammed student lounge on campus whenever we dropped off the paper for staff and students. A few coffees and talks about the challenges of the students and of being a person to help 'Indigenize' an educational institute showed the fine line Brian must walk in his position, but also the passion he brings to his job. He is a fine role model for those students, his co-workers, and the partners of Polytechnic.

His calm and quiet demeanor makes him extremely approachable, a gift when dealing with nervous and sometimes insecure students. Brian asked me to come in and speak to students. First on Louis Riel Day, then at other functions and we developed a friendship. Always nice to catch up. You can understand why he was honoured with an outstanding service award in 2019. Totally deserving.

Well, one year ago, Brian's family was turned upside down when his daughter Megan went missing. A parent's worst nightmare, yet all too common in the Indigenous community. Now Brian, quiet and unassuming, has been thrust into the spotlight as the spokesperson for his family, for his daughter Megan. To raise awareness, the family has led marches, bought billboards, and chased tips they have received from the community. Exhausting and emotional work.

But Brian has done it with class and grace. His words resonate across the media and parents of all races feel his pain and send that love and energy and support that the family needs so badly now. But more than a hug, the family needs to know about Megan. A walk the family hosted in September had the theme, "The silence is killing us." Someone out there knows something and that someone needs to talk. Please. Anyone who may have information on Megan Gallagher's whereabouts is asked to contact Saska-



Brian Gallagher and his wife Debbie at the MMIW walk held in Saskatoon this past month. (Photo by Errol Sutherland)

toon Police at 306-975-8300 or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477.

Truth and Reconciliation Day thoughts

Finally, the survivors of the Indian residential schools and those who didn't survive are being honoured with a statutory holiday, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Judging from media coverage, events held around our country were solemn and respectful and focussed on the survivors and their families.

I went to two pancake breakfasts and then hosted a virtual seminar in the afternoon for 150 people who wanted to learn about our Canadian history and the residential schools. At the end of the day, we watched the

TV special as we were too pooped and Covid concerned to attend the concert in Saskatoon for the survivors, so we handed off our tickets and went to bed.

Just by leaving my house to attend an event, I personally did more than Prime Minister Justin Trudeau did on that day to honour our survivors and those who didn't survive. Credit to PM Trudeau and the government for passing the law to make the day a federal statutory holiday, but Mr. Clueless could not have been more brain dead by taking a vacation in Tofino that day and not attending any sort of event for the survivors that he so preached about for the previous months. The optics were terrible.

Prime Minister Trudeau and his family could have taken a 20-minute drive and

spent an hour or two at a community and sat with the people and just listened. Good for their children, the community and Trudeau's reputation. But they didn't. I scratch my head. This guy was supposed to be the Indigenous People's Prime Minister...that's what he always tells us anyways. Maybe it was just words. That's odd coming from a politician.

Speaking of politicians, the FSIN election is in full swing with all five positions up for grabs in the October 28th vote. Make sure you check out our website in a week or two for something on all the candidates and the issues. In the meantime, hug your elders and your kids, wash your hands, and get vaccinated.



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PUBLISHER / EDITOR: John Lagimodiere, john@eaglefeathernews.com

ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Betty Ann Adam, bettyannadam@eaglefeathernews.com

SOCIAL / DIGITAL MEDIA : Errol Sutherland, errol@eaglefeathernews.com

GENERAL INQUIRIES: contact@eaglefeathernews.com

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THANK YOU FOR
ALL YOUR SUPPORT

Elder Kewistep recognized for reconciliation work

By NC Raine
for Eagle Feather News

Gilbert Kewistep prefers to stay under the radar but in September, he was honoured by the Office of the Treaty Commissioner for his drive and support of Reconciliation in Saskatchewan.

An Elder, professor, social worker, Residential School and Sixties Scoop survivor, Kewistep has spent his lifetime helping people heal from trauma, many of which he experienced himself.

Upon receiving the Ravi Maithel Find-A-Way Award, Kewistep gave credit to his role models.



The Office of the Treaty Commissioner nominated Elder Gilbert Kewistep for the Ravi Maithel Find-A-Way Award for his community work. The award was presented at the 25th annual Raj Manek Mentorship Program banquet. (Photo by John Lagimodiere)

"I was completely honoured by it. You don't expect these things, you're always under the radar. That's how I like to be. Just there to help people better themselves. And I don't walk this road alone," he said.

"My grandmother is my main motivator. I always looked to her. She was the matriarch in our family. I still remember her well. Residential school never took that away from me. The love she had for me. And the other motivator is my dad. Those were the role models that made me want to

he was five, but while she was alive, she fought hard to keep him in her care, he said. He lived with his grandmother, Marie Kewistep, for a short time before being taken to residential school, where he stayed until he was 11. A year after he returned home, he was apprehended and lived in foster care for four years, as part of the Sixties Scoop.

Kewistep describes his childhood as unstable. When he finally returned home, things started to come together after his father, George Blackbird, who was a caller at Sundance ceremonies, came into his life again.

"I think culture is what saved me. I did the street life as well. If it wasn't for my dad and my culture and finding my way back through that, I wouldn't be here today. Watching him and his demeanour, how he handled himself with people, he never refused anyone who came to see him," Kewistep said.

"He was the one that moulded us. To this day, in the work I do at the University, those teachings he taught me, I incorporate them into my classes."

It is that strong desire, instilled in Kewistep from a young age, that prompted him to get into a career in social work. Kewistep earned a Bachelor of Indian Social Work and a Masters in Aboriginal Social Work from First Nations University of Canada, where he now teaches.

As a survivor, Kewistep has helped people through the devastating impacts of residential school and their intergenerational effects. He's also worked to help stop children being apprehended from their home communities.

"I decided I will be there for people in their darkest hour. To let them know there's a light ahead. And it is my hope to make a difference. I've met so many people that have made a difference in my life, who helped me while I was down. That's what drew me to social work."

Kewistep's impact on people of all ages throughout his community and the province is immeasurable, but the influence he's had on his own children and grandchildren may be some indication of that larger impact. To date, he has taught five of his children and one grandchild at the University.

He is also a cultural advisor at the Indigenous Peoples' Health and Research Centre at the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy - University of Regina, speaks regularly at the Wicahitowin Indigenous Engagement Conference and has collaborated on reconciliation projects, including the naming of the Chief Mistawasis Bridge in Saskatoon.

make life better for other people."

Kewistep says he is here to help, not to receive recognition. Such a disposition is in his blood.

"I don't even have my degrees on my wall. I look at life the way my dad lived. He lived a simple life. He dedicated himself to helping people. If I'm half the man he was before he left into the spirit world, then I've accomplished something," he said.

A member of Yellow Quill First Nation, Kewistep grew up mainly in Hudson Bay.

Life didn't take long to throw challenges at him. His mother passed when



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Desjarlais builds community prosperity through construction industry

By NC Raine
for Eagle Feather News

John Desjarlais' career took a zig-zag path, he's a mechanical engineer, who is also a student of public policy, the general manager of a contracting firm and the board chair of an Indigenous construction group. But no matter what direction he's taken, his career has been guided by a common principle: look out for others.

"I just want to live a good life," said Desjarlais.



John Desjarlais, General Manager of Great Plains Construction and Board Chair of Indigenous Owned Construction Companies Group, is dedicated to creating prosperity among Indigenous communities. (Photos provided by John Desjarlais)

"I believe there's enough wealth and resources for everyone. I think it's important that we figure out how we move forward in a way where we're not leaving other people behind."

From Cumberland House in northeast Saskatchewan, Desjarlais saw the positive impact the mining industry had on his Métis family.

"Since I was very young, I got to see the livelihood it provided for us as a family. Moving forward, it really influenced me in terms of what my opportunities were."

With strong convictions in environmentalism and sustainability, Desjarlais's first post-secondary pursuit was at Northland College in La Ronge, where he earned a Radiation and Environmental Monitoring certificate.

After a short stint in the mining industry, he returned to school and earned a Mechanical Engineering degree from the University of Saskatchewan – an interest his father instilled in him. He went on to take a Masters degree in Business Administration, certification in Maintenance Management, and is now working on his second Master's Degree, in Governance and Entrepreneurship in Northern and Indigenous Areas.

"In moving towards public policy and community development, I wanted to see a greater impact on Indigenous and Northern people. After I went to work with the economic development corporation at Cumberland Cree Nation, I developed a deeper understanding and appreciation for some of the challenges around there," he said.

Desjarlais has been General Manager at Great Plains Contracting since 2019, a position and industry that he says is a vehicle to create large scale economic and social impact for Indigenous people.

"It's a field I've become passionate about. Realizing its impact, there's a lot of Indigenous business in this space. Being able to leave my mark in this space really cemented the choice of how I was going to spend the next few years of my life, absolutely committed to this," he said.

Desjarlais has reinforced that impact through the Indigenous Owned Construction Companies Group (IOCCG), a new organization that provides a voice for Indigenous-owned construction companies, where he serves as board chair.

The group, made up of ten construction companies that are at least 51 percent Indigenous-owned, aims to increase the socio-economic impact of construction activities for Indigenous people and advocate for economic reconciliation.

"There's an unhealthy competition between our Indigenous businesses, with no sharing of information, no support for each other and no consistent messaging or a unified voice on how we push back on procurement policy," he said.

"At the end of the day, we're all here to see the best possible engagement with our people, to see inclusive businesses succeed and to provide an opportunity back to communities, to share wealth with our communities."

He says his desire to build a strong, prosperous community is common among Indigenous people.

"There's that strong sense in us. We want our relationships to be good, we want them to be fruitful for everyone. That sense of community and kinship. It's the basis of our treaty relations: to live harmoniously and prosper together."

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MN-S minister overcame vaccine fear, distrust and got the jab

By NC Raine
for Eagle Feather News

Leonard Montgrand is the first to acknowledge the contradiction.

As Minister of Post-Secondary Education at the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S), and Executive Director at the La Loche Friendship Centre, Montgrand has spent a great deal of the last year-and-a-half advocating for safety measures and resources to help fight COVID-19, including encouraging his community to get vaccinated.

But until recently, Montgrand himself was unvaccinated.

"I was a hypocrite. I was telling people to get vaccinated, but I wasn't vaccinated myself. Anytime anyone asked, I would just divert the conversation," he said.

Montgrand, from La Loche, has struggled with an intense fear of vaccines his entire life. He even characterized himself as an 'anti-vaxxer' due to this fear – a fear which led him to use any and all information he could find to validate his vaccination dread.

"I was a voracious reader. There's a lot of misinformation out there on the Internet and I bought into it. I lived off these conspiracy theories because that was a reason not to get vaccinated," he said.

"I thought it would put me in the hospital and on a ventilator."

La Loche was hit hard by COVID-19 in 2020, being called at one point the, "most concerning outbreak in Canada," by experts. The severity of the outbreak only further drove Montgrand's fears.

The turning point came in the summer of 2021 when Ken Roth, his best friend and colleague at the Friendship Centre, called from his camping holiday in Calgary, complaining about how sick he suddenly felt. Roth was also unvaccinated.

The next day Roth called again, this time from the emergency room at a Calgary hospital.

"On the phone I sensed the fear in him. He told me, 'Go get vaccinated. This isn't a f-ing joke. I'm going on a ventilator. Talk to my daughter from this point forward. I can't breathe,'" Montgrand recalled.

That phone call was more than two months ago and Roth, now in hospital in Saskatoon, is still on a ventilator.

"It shook me to the core. I knew I had to do it, but I couldn't sleep at night because I knew the next day I had to get the shot."



Leonard Montgrand, MN-S Minister and a champion of vaccines, was once paralyzed with fear of being vaccinated. (Photo supplied by Leonard Montgrand)

In Saskatoon with his wife, who already had the first shot, Montgrand knew he couldn't put it off any longer.

"I was shaking, I was so scared. Then I saw an old lady in a wheel chair, with an oxygen tank and she was going to get vaccinated. I thought, 'What the hell is wrong with me? If she's getting vaccinated, I can as well,'" he said.

For 15 minutes after the vaccine, and for the three days following, Montgrand waited for something terrible to happen. The only thing he had to report was a sore arm.

"So, much ado about nothing," he said.

"The stress and pressure that was released after my first vaccination, it's like night and day. I can sleep at night. Now I'm telling people it's an immune booster. It's going to help you fight COVID, not kill you."

Montgrand wants his story shared in hopes of convincing others to make the potentially life-saving decision to get vaccinated.

"If you get COVID, who is going to look after your kids, your parents, your grandparents, your grandchildren, your family? Do it for them," he said.

"When I talk to people about getting vaccinated, some people say, 'No, God will look after me. If He wants me, He'll take me.' I mean, what hell kind of answer is that? I say, 'Okay, God gave us a vaccine to help ourselves. It's up to us to use it.'"

Now, Montgrand and the MN-S are on the same page in encouraging everyone to get vaccinated.

In September, the MN-S launched a vaccine incentive lottery, in which fully-vaccinated Métis citizens can enter to win prizes, including a new Dodge Ram truck, a camper trailer or one of 80 \$25,000 scholarships.

"We want to get the numbers up. It's very important. We're trying anything and everything to encourage as many people as we can to get vaccinated," Montgrand said.

Montgrand said he knows the conversations he's having with people, which are no longer coming from a place of hypocrisy but a place of openness and sincerity, could make a profound difference.

"Sit down and talk to people about the vaccine. If you're scared of it, go watch people get vaccinated, sit there and watch. Talk to the (experts) and have an understanding of what's actually happening," he said.

"The vaccine won't kill you. COVID will. COVID is the killer. The vaccine is there for us, to help."

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60's Scoop Healing Foundation to support Survivors with a grant program

By Rose Mansbridge-Goldie
of Eagle Feather News

The Sixties Scoop Healing Foundation has appointed Jacqueline Marie Maurice of Saskatoon as its CEO and will soon roll out a grant program to support 60's Scoop survivors.

"This is a greater gift than any short-term compensation," Maurice said in a recent interview.

Maurice is a Métis 60's Scoop survivor, who did her Ph.D in social work on the Sixties Scoop and used her own experience as a case study. She has written a book on the subject and published two anthologies of essays by Sixties Scoop survivors.

She, along with other Métis and non-Status survivors, was left out of the \$750 million Sixties Scoop national class action settlement agreement. About 30,000 Status First Nations and Inuit survivors are being compensated about \$25,000.

Despite being excluded from the individual payout, Maurice will now have a significant influence on the administration of the other part of the settlement agreement – the \$50 million Healing Foundation.

The Foundation operates independently from government and will provide healing services for all survivors and their families, including Métis and non-Status people.

It's hard to gauge what each community or individual needs to heal, so the Foundation will let communities decide what they need funding for—whether its programming, a gathering place or workshops, Maurice said.

The Foundation is also about commemorating Survivors.

"Many of us are making such meaningful contributions within our communities and our families and communities and we want to celebrate them for years to come," Maurice said.



Dr. Jacqueline Marie Maurice has been appointed CEO of the Sixties Scoop Healing Foundation. "As a Métis 60's Scoop Survivor myself I hold this position very sacredly," Maurice says. (Photo EFN archives)

The grant program is expected to be available by the end of the year.

"We're not here just for this generation of 60's Scoop Survivors, we're here for generations (to come)," Maurice said.

The Foundation operates independently from government and will provide healing services for all survivors and their families, including Métis and non-Status people.

The Foundation will rely on fundraising after the \$50 million from the National Sixties Scoop Settlement is

gone.

"This is just a pebble in the water—we hope it'll create a ripple effect and there will be other organizations that open up," Maurice said.

The volunteer Board of Directors is comprised of Sixties Scoop survivors.

Information about the Foundation can be found here: <https://www.nationalhealingfoundation.com>.

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Indigenous adoption focus of Wilson-Bird novel Probably Ruby

By Julia Peterson
for Eagle Feather News

Saskatchewan Métis and nêhiyaw author Lisa Bird-Wilson's second novel, *Probably Ruby*, is already leaving a lasting impression on readers.

"Ruby spends her whole life in this identity crisis of not really knowing or understanding who she is, feeling lost and trying to find her way back home," said Bird-Wilson, describing her character who was adopted as an infant and goes in search of her Indigenous identity.

For Bird-Wilson, Ruby's story has been years in the telling.

She began working on the book around 2016, after the publication of her debut poetry collection *The Red Files*.

"I was looking for a new project, and I really, really wanted to get back to writing fiction," she said. "So I started to think about what I would write about and what that might look like. I really didn't know where to go.

"I was thinking, maybe I don't have any more fiction left in me?"

Initially, Bird-Wilson believed she would write a short story collection about being Indigenous and adopted.

"But as I was going along, I realized, 'This is a terrible short story collection, because all of these stories sound like they're about the same person,'" she said. "And then I realized - okay, that's not what I'm writing here. I'm writing a book about one character, and that character is Ruby."

Once Bird-Wilson, who describes her fiction as "very character-driven," had found Ruby, it was a matter of getting to know her and making her become real on the page.

"Ultimately, for me, I 'got' Ruby when I figured out her laugh," said Bird-Wilson. "In the book, she has this great big laugh that she just swings around all over the place and uses in various ways."

The title indicates the tentative nature of Ruby's understanding of herself, Bird-Wilson said.

"So she's 'probably' Ruby, but she even goes through this part in the book where she finds out what her name was when she was born and it wasn't Ruby.

"And that's the Indigenous adoptee experience, right? To go through this unknowing and insecurity about, 'Who am I? Where do I belong?' Something as basic as your name can throw you for a loop."

Probably Ruby was released on August 24th - coincidentally, Ruby's birthday in

the novel. Since then, Bird-Wilson has been "appreciating and enjoying" the positive reception.

Fellow author Warren Cariou described the book as "brilliant," and had high praise for Bird-Wilson's handling of difficult topics.

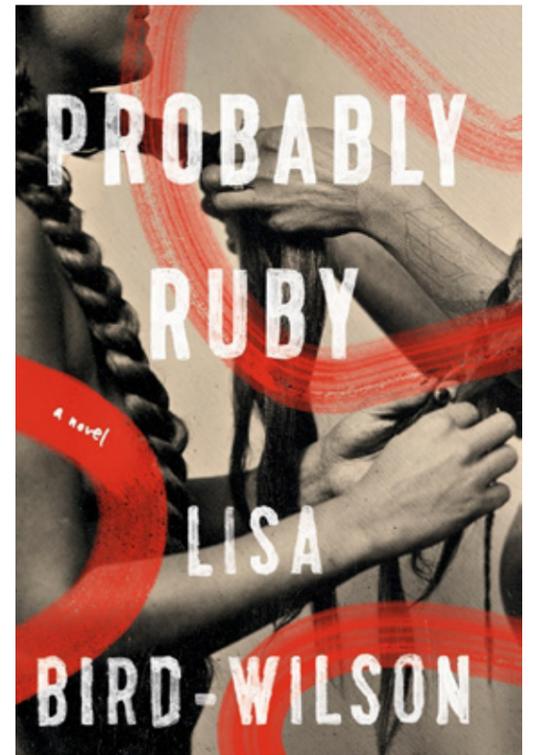
"Lisa is an extraordinary stylist, and this novel explores Indigenous women's lives in a way that is empowering and that doesn't follow the usual tropes of trauma and victimization," he said. "I think of her as a Michif Alice Munro."

Bird-Wilson has also enjoyed hearing from readers about how they feel connected to Ruby even after they have turned the last page.

"I get to hear them talk about her as a character and say that she's stuck with them," Bird-Wilson said. "And I usually say, 'Well, she's stuck with me too.' I still sort of have Ruby in my head and have her on a trajectory that I'm thinking about."

Though Bird-Wilson has been enjoying the acclaim, she has not been resting on her laurels. Since *Probably Ruby* was released, she has signed a book deal for a memoir and been working on a series of essays.

"These essays are talking about my origin story, talking about my background, finding my family and trying to connect with my relatives and my community and my ancestors," she said.



***Probably Ruby* is Lisa Bird-Wilson's second novel. Its success has seen her sign on to write her memoirs and a series of essays.**

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Indigenous Sports Academy offers intensive hockey training, culture & school

By NC Raine
for Eagle Feather News

Fifteen-year-old hockey player Alex Crowe-Nippi had been hoping to find an opportunity to accelerate his athletics career. He found Saskatoon's new Indigenous Sports Academy, which does exactly that, while also pushing personal and academic development.

"It's been really good. Most of us come from different places all over, so it's

dence in them. You see some of the kids are shy at first but start to come out of their shell," said Bear.

Crowe-Nippi says he is being exposed to more Indigenous cultures since joining the academy.

"A lot of it is new. Some of the words my teammates say, the languages they can speak, it's different. Some of them talk about their culture a lot," he said.

The boys attend City Park Collegiate in Saskatoon, which has a flex program that accommodates their heavy training commitments, Bear said.

They attend classes in the morning, then leave for practice and training over the noon hour to the early afternoon. They are then bussed from the training facility to school for the remainder of the afternoon. Families back home get weekly email updates on their kids' studies and training progress.

Bear said he'd like to expand the program to include a girls' team in the future and possibly other sports as well.

"It's about a process of maturing, developing that core sense of self. The program isn't just about athletics," Bear said.

"There's a lot of kids out there that just need a chance, an opportunity. There's a lot of talent in our

communities. With this program, they can get a sense of family, a sense of comfort because it's all Indigenous kids. I was raised with mentors, so I think it's important to do whatever you can to give back."



Front Row (L-R): Hunter Nepinak, Trae Kincade, Keegan Dansereau, Jake Yakubowski, Amos Kejick, Deegan Wapass, Kaiden Healy Middle Row (L-R): Conor Palendat (ass't coach), Ken Thomas, Kevin Roberts, Greg Slobodzian (coach), Jace Harry, Caige Starr, Coen Bear, Alex Crowe-Nippi, Back Row (L-R): Shaemus McLeod (ass't coach), Nathan Boyd (athletic therapist), Andrew Watson (equipment manager/trainer), Sage Roberts, Jaden Sasakamoose, Deylan Watson, Konnor Watson, Kian Littlechild, CJ Morin, Alex Morin, Courage Bear, Elder Frank Badger, Elder Barb Badger. (Photo by Ted Whitecalf)

been good meeting people and learning where they are from," said Crowe-Nippi, who comes from Rose Valley, Saskatchewan.

"It's been demanding. (Trying to balance) homework and hockey. But yeah, I think it's brought the best out in us," he said.

The new Indigenous Sports Academy (ISA) is modelled after similar programs across Canada that provide student athletes with high level coaching, elite training and academics that adjust to their training schedules.

"We want, most of all, to make sure they are growing as young men," said founding director Courage Bear of Ochapowace First Nation.

"Sports gives a lot and it's important to provide opportunities for these young people to develop as athletes, but we want to make sure they all go away from this being better people."

In its inaugural year, the Saskatoon-based ISA Eagles program is comprised of 19 student athletes, aged 15 to 17, from Saskatchewan, Ontario, Alberta and Manitoba. Out of town members are billeted.

The team is not in a league, but Bear hopes they will enter the Canadian Sport School Hockey League in the future. Until then, they plan to participate in AA tournaments, exhibition games and showcase tournaments.

The academy is funded through registration fees, fundraising projects and sponsorships from four Saskatchewan First Nations: Kahkewistahaw, Lac La Ronge, Ochapowace, and Flying Dust.

Culture is a key component of the program, Bear said.

"Culture is so important. We've already brought Elders out to talk with the team, so we're just trying to create a sense of comfort, self-esteem, and confi-



Métis artists “make the revolution irresistible”

By **Rose Mansbridge-Goldie**
of *Eagle Feather News*

Holly Aubichon and Mackenzy Vida are decorating Treaty 4 Territory in ways that honour their Indigenous identities.

Aubichon, a Métis artist, recently started a new job as Administrative Director for the Regina artist collective, Sâkêwêwak, and then received the BMO 1st ART! Award for her oil painting “Modern Medicine.”

Earlier this year, when Aubichon was finishing a fine arts degree, she fell in love with the ancient Indigenous tattooing practice of skin stitching and is currently apprenticing to practitioner, Stacey Fayant.

“The apprenticeship is a passing down of a practice, so it is a long process. There’s more socialization involved in learning to skin stitch,” compared to modern day, commercial tattooing, Aubichon said.



Holly Aubichon, a Métis artist on Treaty 4 Territory, is the new Administrative Director for Regina arts collective Sâkêwêwak. (Photo by Rose Mansbridge-Goldie)

Tattooing brings pain that is emotionally healing, comparable to the physical healing that comes from sometimes painful treatments like acupuncture, Aubichon said.

Skin stitching is an intimate process.

“You pull the needle through the skin with a little tiny string attached and then you tap the ink in. When you pull and you wipe and there’s a dash, it feels really empowering. There’s a lot of beauty to it.”

Aubichon intends to keep the traditional practice alive as a way to give back to Indigenous people.

Aubichon looks forward to giving skin stitch tattoos and teaching whoever wants to learn.

“If we are going to revive the tradition, every Indigenous body who wants to learn should be able to,” Aubichon said.

Across town, her fellow fine arts graduate, Mackenzy Vida, an Algonquin-Métis artist, stands back from her parent’s garage door, spray paint in hand and examines a

blue-green bear flanked by different flowers.

“The bear represents bravery and courage, mentioned in the Seven Grandfather Teachings, and my mom just likes (bears),” Vida said.

“The provincial flowers are for all the places my parents have lived: trilliums for Ontario, wild roses for Alberta, and prairie lilies for Saskatchewan,” she said, noting that she descends from Algonquin First Nations in Maniwaki, Quebec

Growing up, Vida’s dad’s family was quiet about their Indigenous heritage.

“My mom’s side is Ukrainian and we used to do things like make pysanka, traditional Ukrainian Easter eggs. I’ve always known there was more to our family but it wasn’t until recently I had the courage to incorporate my dad’s Algonquin heritage in my art,” Vida said.

Her dad’s family has opened up over time and Vida is learning about her culture so she can accurately honour it in her work.

“I was recently given a book in French, written by a relative of mine, that has images of art and traditional designs from the Indigenous populations in Québec.”

Art helps Vida learn about and share her Algonquin heritage while also prompting important conversations about Indigenous resurgence.

“The role of the artist is to make the revolution irresistible and I intend on doing exactly that.”

Art gives Vida peace in a world that sometimes feels unwelcoming and uncertain.

“I’ve always struggled with my mental health and art therapy was a huge part of my journey—creativity comes in waves but I never stop drawing,” she said.

Vida is preparing to paint a mural in a Balfour Collegiate classroom to give the Indigenous students pride.

“The impact my work can have and the potential to bring life to a space encourages me to keep going.”



The mural is a tribute to Vida’s family heritage. (Photo by Rose Mansbridge-Goldie)



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Rose Morin, *Beaded Rose*, 2007, fabric, beads

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One Arrow teen artist-entrepreneurs vie for big cash prize

By Julia Peterson
for Eagle Feather News

A group of young entrepreneurs from One Arrow First Nation has made it to the final round of a competition with a potential \$25,000 grand prize.

Pow Wow Pitch, a grassroots community of Indigenous entrepreneurs from across Turtle Island, which runs a yearly pitch competition for Indigenous artists and innovators, saw more than 1,600 entrants this year.

Members of the business club at One Arrow's Almightyvoice Education Centre have already wowed the judges with their pitch for 3R Innovative Imaging (the 3R stands for recycle, reinvent, reuse). In this sustainable business, students turn cabinet doors, discarded wood and other materials destined for the landfill into one-of-a-kind pieces of art.

10th grader sisters Ruby Mae Daniels and Lee Edna Daniels co-founded the business, which they run with other members of their school's business club. The 15 students are in charge of every aspect of the business from making the products at school to organizing retail contracts throughout the province. Together, they have already sold thousands of pieces, like rearview mirror hangings and wall art, at trade shows and in gift stores.

Now, Daniels has taken the lead in sharing her and her fellow students' work to an international Indigenous audience.



Ruby Mae Daniels (centre) and her sister Lee Edna Daniels (right) pitch the judges on their school's art business during the semifinals of the Pow Wow Pitch competition.

"We're still in a little bit of a state of shock," she said, reflecting on how far the business has advanced in the competition. "I am getting a lot of congratulations and I'm-proud-of-you right now, so I'm soaking in all the compliments."

Joe Taylor, the youth entrepreneur program coordinator at One Arrow, says making it this far in the pitch competition has been a "very humbling" experience. But while he is proud of how well the students have done, he is not surprised.

"The kids here have done some very special things and some great things are coming their way," he said. "The kids are absolutely innovative and creative. It's amazing what these young kids can do. It just simply astounds."

Should they win, Ruby says the money will let her and her young colleagues build a website, launch a social media presence and fund start-up kits with art supplies and instructions to help other Indigenous youth get "the chance to succeed, like we have."

Regardless of how the competition goes from here, it has already been an invaluable experience for the young entrepreneurs.

"We've already won, to be quite honest," said Taylor. "Just getting to meet and work with some of the mentors has been an incredible opportunity for the kids. They're so supportive and engaging."

Mentors from companies like RBC, Shopify and Square helped the students refine their pitches before the grand finale.

3R Innovative Imaging, along with the rest of the finalists, will make their final pitch to the judges on October 12. The finale will be broadcast online at <https://www.powwowpitch.org/>, and the winners will be announced on October 20.

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Integrity, democracy priorities for first female MNC President Caron

*By NC Raine
for Eagle Feather News*

For the first time in its history, with the election of Cassidy Caron, the Métis National Council (MNC) will be led by a woman.

Caron is also the first new president to be elected in 18 years, since former president Clément Chartier was elected in 2003. He did not run in the recent election.

Caron, of Trail British Columbia, previously served as youth minister with the Métis Nation of BC. She decided to run for president of the national council after seeing the provincial Métis Nation organizations strengthening relationships in recent years.

“When I saw how much they’ve accomplished in the last few years, really working together, really communicating and supporting one another, that’s when I knew the timing was right for my role as that facilitator, that convener, that relationship builder,” Caron told Eagle Feather News.

Caron has roots in the historic Saskatchewan Métis communities of Batoche and St. Louis. Her grandmother, Marie Odile Boucher, was from one of the first five Métis families to settle in St. Louis and her grandfather, Jean-Baptist Caron, was born at Batoche, where his father, Jean Caron Sr., bought a house during the Battle of Batoche, which now stands as a feature at the national historic site.

“He was a Métis patriot, a Métis nationalist, and that has run through my family lineage ever since,” Caron said.

She was raised in BC by her mother, Anna Caron, but stays connected to her family in Prince Albert and Batoche during annual summer visits.

Restoring integrity to the Métis National Council is Caron’s priority. The national council has not held a general assembly or a board of governors meeting since 2018. Caron said she wants to ensure all voices are represented at the national level.

“My big one, once we are able to have that democracy, and restore that integrity at the Métis National Council, is really re-centering our relationships,” she said.

“I really want to work together, moving forward with the Board of Governors, and making sure that the Métis National Council is a space for our Métis governments to advance their aspirations at the national level.”

“Across all our provinces, spending time within our communities, getting to know one another. It’s so important that we take time together, share stories in a space where we’re not always making decisions. That relationship piece is very important to me.”

In her desire to bring unity, Caron said she has felt a sense of “renewed inspiration” from the many members she’s spoken with, particularly youth and Elders.

She has heard repeatedly, from the Indigenous women leaders before her, that it is “time for our matriarchs to rise.”

“I hope this monumental change is inspiring to others. I can’t wait to continue creating space for more young people, more Métis women, more gender diverse folks. We are stronger together. We need all the people at the table, having their voices heard, in order to make sure we do this right and the Métis Nation moves forward in a good way.”



With her victory at the Métis National Council elections, Cassidy Caron becomes the first female President to lead the organization. (Photo supplied by MNC)



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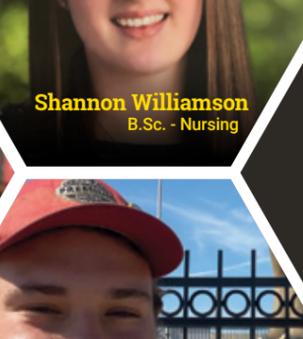
Janelle Smith
B.Sc. - Nursing



Shannon Williamson
B.Sc. - Nursing



Victoria Watkins
Bachelor of Education



Blake Brown
Instrumentation Engineering

nîkihk Cleaning Products to open store, art workshop in Saskatoon

By NC Raine
for Eagle Feather News

The creation and success of First Nations-owned nîkihk Cleaning Products has been a silver lining in the grey cloud of the pandemic. The company, owned by Battleford Agency Tribal Chiefs (BATC), will open its own store at Midtown Plaza in downtown Saskatoon in mid-October.

Nîkihk has grown like wildflowers since beginning in March 2020. It has already sold about 80,000 cleaning kits, and their products can be found in about 25 retail stores in most Saskatchewan cities.

"This location is perfect. This will be a place that hopefully will act as a learning place, where we can promote our languages, customs, our arts and our gifts," said Neil Sasakamoose, BATC Executive Director and President of nîkihk.

The Midtown location will be more than a retail space: it will also house a workshop for local Indigenous artisans and craftspeople to work on and showcase their products. Because nîkihk has provided the opportunity for Indigenous people to create products grounded in local traditions and customs, they want to make space for others to do the same, Sasakamoose said.

"We will bring people who are great with their artistic vision. People who

can interpret culture and traditions into art. This is what this place will represent. This will be a place where local artists can come and create," he said.

Vice Chief David Pratt of the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) applauds the business, which he says is good for everyone.

"Things like this are so important for our Tribal Councils and for our 74 First Nations. We start to see our people get involved in the economy. That's so good because it just doesn't benefit Indigenous people, it benefits non-Indigenous people as well. So we're really happy and pleased to see entities like this get developed and business opportunities get created for our people. We know this is just the tip of the iceberg," he said.

Nîkihk's success was born out of a necessity to supply First Nations with cleaning and sanitation products at the beginning of the pandemic, when supplies were short. After meeting with Saskatoon-based cleaning company EnvironWay, BATC sought Elders and Knowledge Keepers to collaborate on a product that incorporates local plants.

Women are at the forefront of the company, from the beginning and going forward, Sasakamoose said.

"I can't say enough about our strong women leaders," he said.

"They have been essential. It's our Elders, women and ladies, who named it, they gave us permission to use the products... as long as you listen and follow things in order, you'll be fine. When you get out of that order, you'll get in trouble."



Members of the BATC, FSIN, and representatives from the Midtown Plaza celebrate the announcement of the nîkihk storefront with a key to the mall. (Photo supplied)

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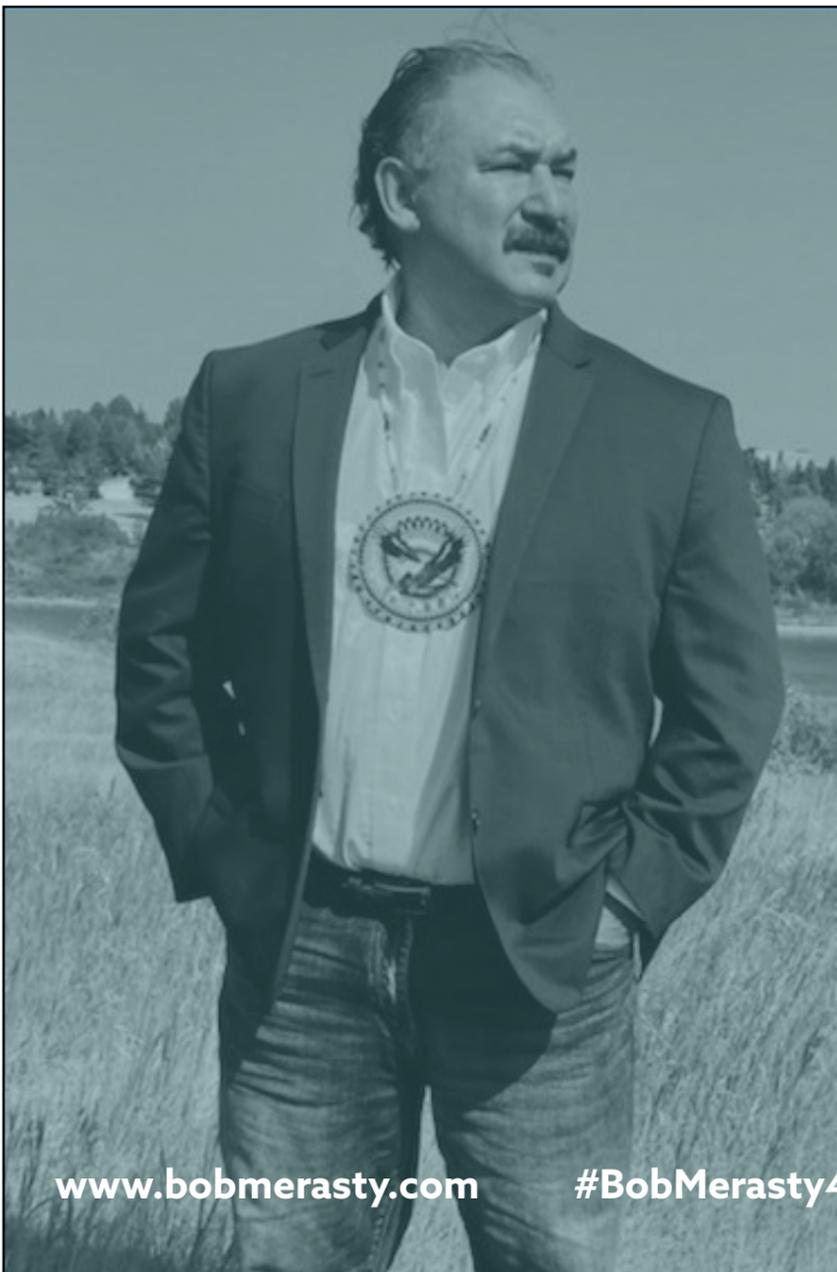
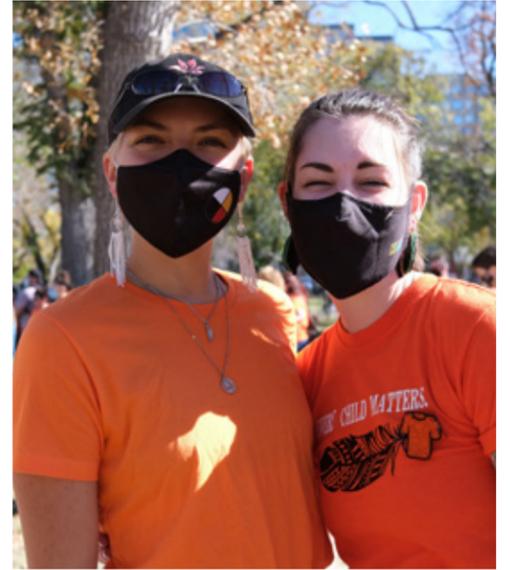
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Métis neurologist advises undecided to explore

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

Saskatchewan's first Indigenous neurologist, Dr. Landon Perlett, followed a winding education path to his career.

Born east of Regina at Indian Head, Perlett grew up in rural Saskatchewan.

His father, Arthur Perlett, is a farmer and carpenter who home schooled Perlett and his two siblings. Their mother, Marilyn Poitras, is a lawyer, whose education and career also took the family to Boston, Iqaluit, Victoria and points in between.

Wherever they lived, the family always kept a home in Saskatchewan and joined Poitras' extended Cree and Métis family at her father's home in the Qu'Appelle area.

Perlett finished high school in Lumsden and headed to the University of Regina, where his original plan was to become a teacher and a writer. But the class that most intrigued him was archeology. So after the first year, he transferred to the University of Saskatchewan, which had an archeology program, and completed a Bachelor of Science degree.

"I was always interested in the science of it, especially looking at cadaveric remains, human remains," he said.

In his last year of the program, a professor suggested Perlett take a class in gross human anatomy, which allowed him to examine bodies that had been donated to science. It opened a whole new area of investigation for him.

"There was so much more to look at than just bones, which I'd been focusing on," he said.

Perlett's new fascination with the human body led him, for the first time, to consider studying medicine.

"Most people that wanted to take medicine had had that in their head since high school, but I never had really thought about it."

The prospect of moving from the study of the long dead to the living was "daunting but exciting," so with the encouragement of professors, he spent a year taking the required physics and biochemistry classes, and applied to medical school.

"I was excited to work with living people with present problems, but I knew it was going to be a huge change from the career path I had selected, where there's more urgency, where people's health and lives can be at risk sometimes."

In his second year he worked with neurologists and became enthralled by the brain and human behaviour.

"There was so much exotic mystery about how does the brain work that we're still learning about today."

"I really just like the puzzle of people's problems when they come to you and they're having various symptoms and how is this all tied together."

After graduating with a medical degree in 2015, Perlett was accepted into the five-year neurology residency program in Saskatoon.

This January, he passed the neurology board exams and was told he was the first Indigenous person to do so at the University of Saskatchewan.

Like many Métis people, Perlett's fair skin and hair reflect his mixed ancestry, but his Indigenous roots aren't buried deep in the past. He was close to his grandfather George Poitras, who took him hunting on the land, told him stories and taught him to make bannock.

At Thanksgiving and Christmas, "my aunts and uncles would be cooking together making rubaboo or bullet soup."

"Growing up in that background with mixed ancestry, mixed culture I thought



Dr. Landon Perlett's learning journey has taken him to a fellowship in dementia at the Foothills Medical Centre in Calgary. (Photo submitted)

was a pretty amazing experience to hear different languages growing up and hear different cultural beliefs, myths and stories from the Métis, French and Cree sides of my family.

"I felt that was a pretty special way to grow up...to feel a part of so many different cultures even though my looks don't fit what most people would think of if you said I'm a Métis person."

Perlett has had to defend Indigenous people when he was among non-Indigenous people.

"Racism is sort of everywhere... I definitely had to chime in and correct people for mistaken beliefs or ideas or straight up racist remarks," he said.

As a doctor in the health care system, he has advocated for greater understanding about different cultures, such as when a huge extended family arrives to be with a gravely ill loved one and to support each other, despite hospital limits on visitors.

"We shouldn't just blanket-statement make rules, because different cultures have different expectations around health and caring for their loved ones," he said.

"For people who are undecided I would say just go and try to find classes that are fun for you. Find teachers you can bond with and learn from. Find other students that have similar interests to you and this process sort of evolves and changes, you'll find your path just as long as you're making learning fun to do every day."

Perlett is currently in Calgary doing a two-year fellowship in dementia.

DARRIN MORIN

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2021 FEDERATION OF SOVEREIGN INDIGENOUS
NATIONS THIRD VICE CHIEF CANDIDATE

SIGA provides online gaming platform, planning to expand worldwide

By Rose Mansbridge-Goldie
of Eagle Feather News

The Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority (SIGA) has struck a deal to deliver online gaming and sports betting to the province.

The Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) and the Government of Saskatchewan have signed an amendment to the gaming framework agreement, deciding on a 50/50 revenue split for the upcoming website.

“This is a historical agreement, the first of its kind not only in Saskatchewan but in Canada,” FSIN Chief Bobby Cameron said.

The added revenue from online gaming and sports betting will increase SIGA’s ability as a non-profit to support good quality of life on the 74 First Nations in Saskatchewan, SIGA Chair Chief Reginald Bellerose said.

He hopes the site will bring in an extra \$20-\$25 million on top of their existing revenue from their seven existing casinos and said employment for the website will be tech-savvy careers.

The site will focus on Saskatchewan for now but there is room to expand.

“We want to take this worldwide. That’s our next vision,” Cameron said.

Revenues of online gaming would not be affected by a lockdown which ensures a consistent stream of money being put back into communities.

“We would like to generate billions of dollars for our 74 First Nations,” Cameron said.

Anyone with a “Players Club Card” from any of SIGA’s casinos will be able to use that to get into the site where there will be online versions of the games, plus online sports betting.

SIGA and the provincial government have a long history of partnership dating back to 1994.

“SIGA has earned their reputation as a gaming organization and we’re excited to move forward with them on this new venture,” Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority (SLGA) Minister Jim Reiter said.

Revenues of online gaming would not be affected by a lockdown which ensures a consistent stream of money being put back into communities.

The site will be regulated by SaskGaming to ensure safe, secure play.

“This is what true partnership looks like—you put your differences aside and work together for the good of the people,” Cameron said.

A website developer will be chosen in the coming months and the site is expected to launch next year.



SIGA Chair Chief Reginald Bellerose says he hopes the online platform will generate \$20-\$25 million on top of existing revenue. Left to right: FSIN Chief Bobby Cameron, SLGA Minister Jim Reiter, SIGA Chair Chief Reginald Bellerose. Back: SaskGaming Minister Don Morgan (Photo by Rose Mansbridge-Goldie)

I am Cree from Thunderchild First Nation, located in Treaty 6 Territory. I have been a volunteer and community leader for many years and have served as an elected leader for my Nation. I am a proud father of four and have always been passionate about creating better opportunities for our people with a focus on our youth.

I believe a **wholistic approach to the wellbeing of our children** will help to create a better future for generations to come. I have confidence that a strong focus on **education in early years**, combined with our **cultural and traditional teachings**, will create a foundation for generational healing. I am committed to following the mandates of the leadership and **honouring the Spirit and Intent of Treaties**.

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Reconciliation Ally: From the Office of the Treaty Commissioner Archives



By Sheldon Krasowski
for Eagle Feather News

Documenting Chiefs' Treaty medals is one of the research priorities for the Office of the Treaty Commissioner. As part of this research, Treaty Commissioner Mary Culbertson and her staff were invited to collaborate with Elders at Kinistin First Nation.

The main focus of the meeting was to confirm that Chief Kinistin did not receive his Treaty medal when he agreed to Treaty Four, but the Elders also highlighted the early friendship between Chief Kinistin and a fur trader and settler named Reginald Beatty. According to Kinistin First Nation Elder Louise Smokeyday, Reginald Beatty assisted with Chief Kinistin's claim for Indigenous title and lands under Treaty Four. In return, Chief Kinistin invited Beatty to ceremonies where he learned Cree and Saulteaux traditions and eventually became a fluent Cree speaker. Chief Kinistin and Beatty were lifelong friends and allies at a time when increased colonial pressures tended to make early settlers wary of Indigenous peoples.

In many ways, Chief Kinistin and Reginald Beatty were unlikely allies. When Beatty settled near Kinistin's camp in 1884 the Chief accused him of encroaching on his territory and warned him to leave. Although associated with Chief Yellowquill who agreed to Treaty Four, Chief Kinistin refused to settle down and left Chief Yellowquill with 14 followers, eight of whom were Kinistin's sons. Chief Kinistin was described as over 6 feet tall with handsome aqualine features and a chest marked by scars from arrows and bullets. Kinistin was a successful trader and was wealthy with horses, furs and all kinds of supplies. After the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) sold Rupertsland to Canada in 1869, Chief Kinistin severed trade for selling "the Indians birthright" which they had no right to. Instead Kinistin dealt with the free traders, especially Zavier Batoche, who

became wealthy from trading with the Chief.

Reginald Beatty was from Lakefield Ontario and travelled west in 1874. He worked for many years with the HBC and was eventually a free trader, settling near Chief Kinistin's camp in 1884. Beatty lived at the site for many years and is known as the founder of Melfort, Saskatchewan which was built not far from Beatty's homestead. A few months before Chief Kinistin died, he called for Beatty and asked that Canada recognize title to his ancestral territory.

According to Beatty's account of the meeting he replied, "that a promise of this kind was not in my power, but I would try my best to get the lands reserved for them." Chief Kinistin responded, "keep your word in this and long shall be your life and prosperous your days in the future. Break your word to me and evil spirits shall haunt your existence and make your life miserable."

After the Chief's death, Beatty began lobbying the Department of Indian Affairs to have Kinistin's territory set aside as a Reserve. By 1898 he had written numerous letters extolling the virtues of Kinistin's community, including their cattle holdings and successful farming exploits. Basically, Beatty told them what they wanted to hear. And it worked.

By 1899 Indian Affairs Commissioner David Laird agreed to set aside the reserve and provide some assistance with farming. Establishing Kinistin First Nation was not without its challenges. The Department of the Interior sold timber licenses on reserved land to settlers; Treaty hunting rights were infringed upon; drought and hail devastated crops ... But every challenge was documented by a letter or petition written by Beatty to support Kinistin First Nation. Beatty reminisced about his early days in newspaper accounts published in the 1920s, and by all accounts he lived a long and prosperous life. Reginald Beatty died at the age of 74 and is buried at the Melfort cemetery.



Reginald Beatty was a great ally to Chief Kinistin and his people. He is seen here with his wife Mary. (Photo Melfort Museum)

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The Saskatoon Indian Métis Friendship Centre and its long history

Fifty years ago, the first Indian and Métis Friendship Centre in Saskatoon was above a vacuum cleaner store on 20th Street. There were dances most often featuring performances by the Knight brothers. Their repertoire included endless renditions of "Cinnamon Girl" by Neil Young.

At that time there were far fewer Indigenous people in the city and not so many places Indigenous people could meet and socialize. The centre was the Indigenous version of the welcome wagon.

Over the years the Indigenous migration from First Nations and Métis communities into the city took off like a moon rocket. The west side became increasingly Indigenous with a growing youth population, while the east side remains largely non-Indigenous with an aging population.

Crime, like in other prairie cities, has increased. There are now increasingly dangerous drugs, suicide, violence, addictions, homelessness and family break up. Youth gangs are dangerous, lost to their people and themselves. For many, it is the dark world, distant from a functional past.

No people self destruct. There is always a reason why things are the way they are. The way forward is sometimes the way back. The revitalized cultural spiritual healing path of the ancestors has helped many. Culture is therapy, or so the slogan goes. Easy to say but harder to do.

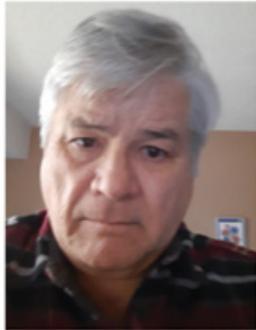
The Friendship Center introduced innovative, culturally-based programs in a way rigid head-based mainstream could not. It began with client-driven smudging, sharing circles, Elder talks and sweat lodges. There

were originally two sweat lodges serving the city. One was Lakota, run by the Woods family, and the other Cree and Saulteaux, kept by the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College, which is now known as the Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Centre. There are currently 14 lodges at last count. The Saskatoon Friendship Centre offers weekly rides to the well-attended Linklater family lodge outside the city. First Nation counseling has a traditional foundation with mainstream appropriation. Mainstream is most often the opposite with culture relegated to a mere add-on.

The centre at one time took the lead providing healing programs until other Indigenous-controlled community service organizations came on stream. In many ways it was the Friendship Centres and the treatment centres which primed the pump for

the many Indigenous controlled healing initiatives which followed.

The old center was eventually replaced by a larger building on Wall Street, which now needs replacing. The current moldering building is cramped, worn and well past its prime. There are options. Not so many years ago the Saskatchewan Transit Company shut down province wide. The empty Saskatoon terminal is a block away and has had a For Lease sign posted for some time. It would make for an excellent greatly improved center. Should the center move to this location I can see the ribbon-cutting ceremony, followed by a tribute to the past with the Knight brothers, now grown old, singing a rousing rendition of Cinnamon Girl as they first did in the original center 50 years ago, but this is just me.



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