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Windspeaker • Established 1983

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Saying 'NO!' to Bill C-51

Aboriginal women leading the Toronto march against Bill C-51, March 14. Similar marches were held at multiple locations throughout Canada.

Please see full story and more photos on page 7.

Photo: Barb Nahwegahbow

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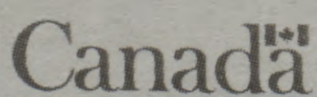
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Two days after Darlene Necan talked to a Toronto audience about the daily desperation of poverty and homelessness in Northern Ontario, she got some much-needed good news.

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Families given priority at national roundtable 9

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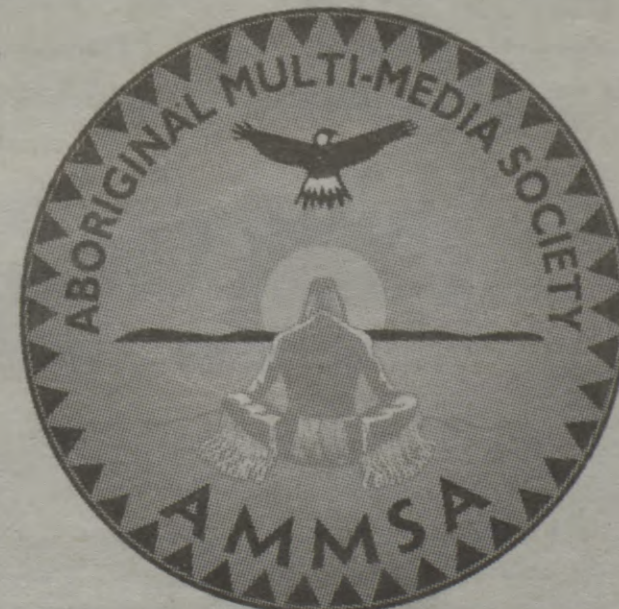
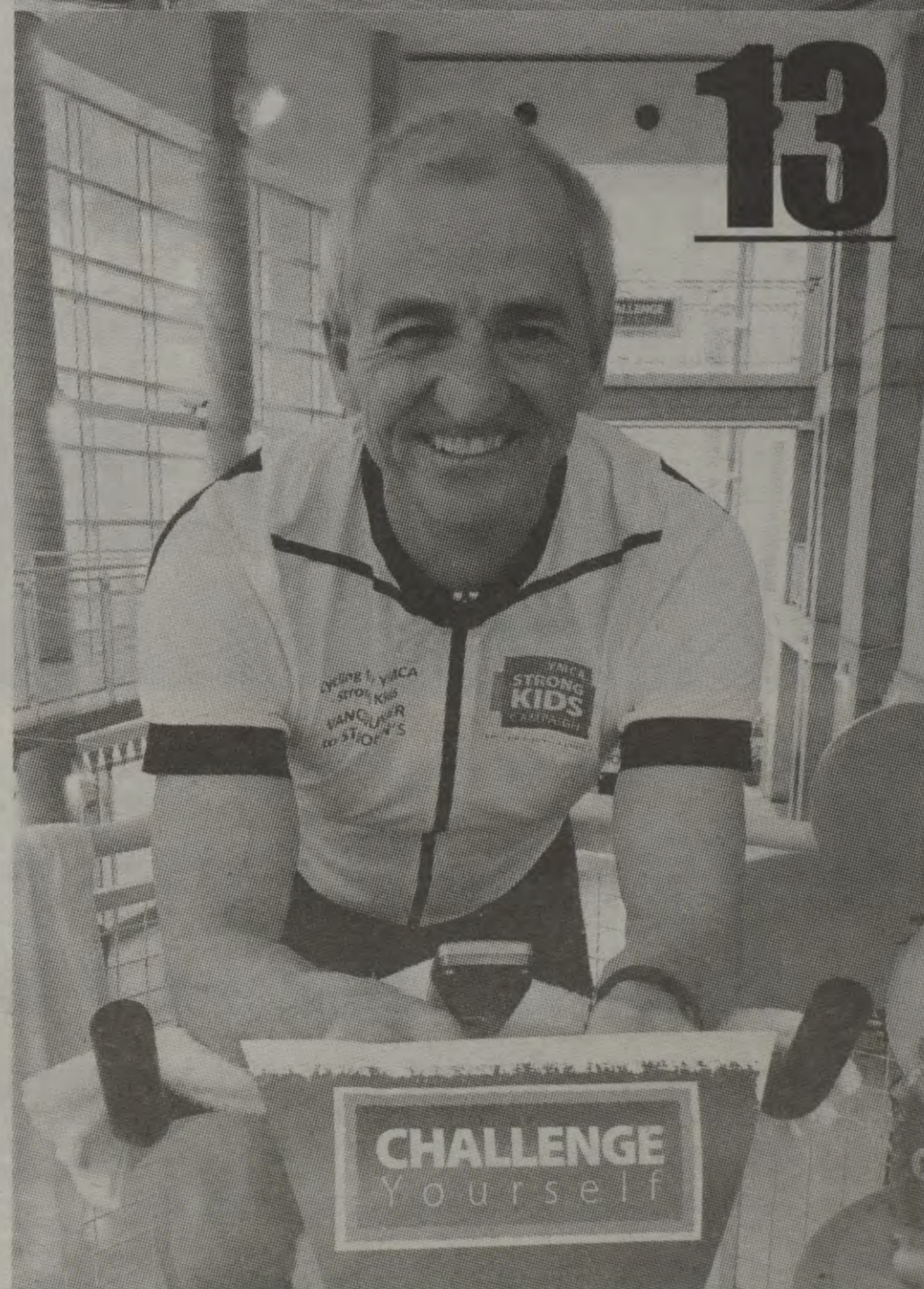
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An expert panel established by the Assembly of First Nations to gather information on the specific claims process is underscoring the findings of a report authored by claims research directors from across Canada.

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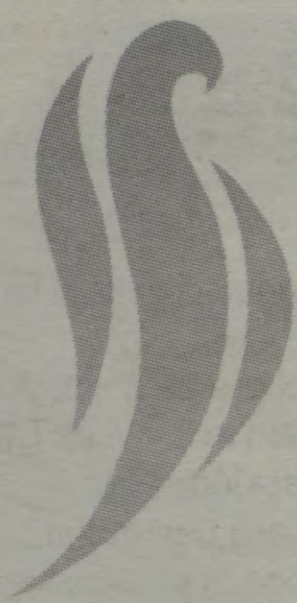
Flags were lowered and tributes flowed when four artists were killed Feb. 10 in one horrific car crash in Saskatchewan; sentiment justified all the more by examining why they were travelling together that snowy morning.



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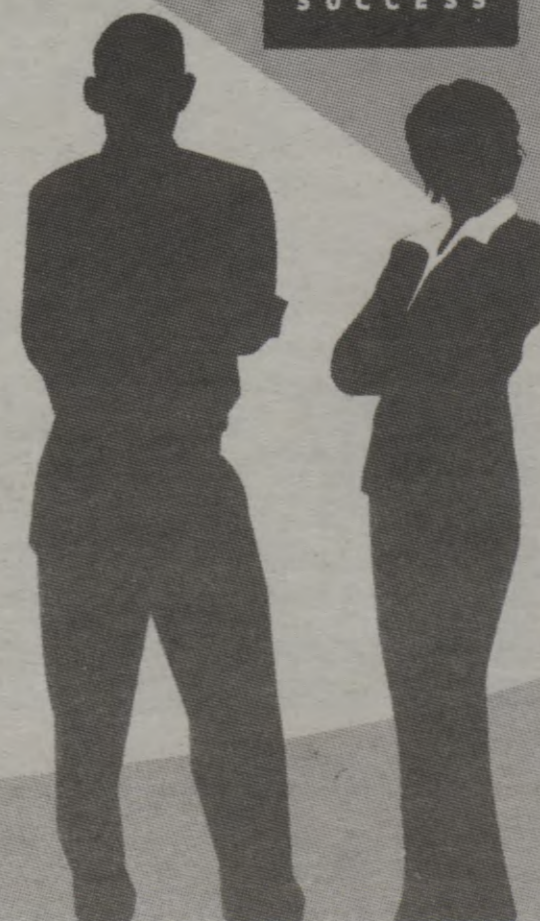
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The real threat is C-51

It's very hard to disregard the very high level opposition to Bill C-51, the anti-terrorism legislation proposed by the federal government, but we fear that's the plan of this Harper Conservative government.

In March, the Canadian Bar Association said the vague and broadly worded language of the legislation would limit freedoms and liberties, while not improving Canadian's safety at all, which is, at least, the publicly-stated reason for bill.

Legitimate activities around public dissent could be caught up by the bill, the association said. And that's perhaps the private motivation of the Harper government's push to ram the bill through. That's what First Nations leaders are saying, anyway.

"We believe this bill is less about Jihadists under every bed and more about increasing the output of the Tar Sands, and facilitating the heavy oil pipeline proposals across the country, and will serve to severely undermine the constitutional and human rights of Indigenous peoples," said Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, president of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. †He was providing comment to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

"The Union of BC Indian Chiefs believes the sweeping scope of Bill C-51 directly violates the ability of all Indigenous peoples to exercise, assert and defend their constitutionally-protected and judicially-recognized Indigenous title and rights to their respective territories," reads a press release sent out by the organization.

"It is absolutely appalling that as Indigenous peoples protecting our territories we may be faced with the many insidious, provocative and heavy-handed powers that are granted by this omnibus Bill C-51. The Harper government has dramatically changed internal government practices, policymaking structures and decision-making processes to serve an explicit natural resources development agenda. We have witnessed the gutting of environmental legislation, clamp-down of scientific analysis and comprehensive surveillance programs of Indigenous and environmental opposition," Phillip said.

He reminds us that not too long ago he was arrested at Burnaby Mountain as he protested the Kinder Morgan and Enbridge pipelines. It was an act of civil disobedience that could, under Bill C-51, have him branded a terrorist, he said.

In his testimony to the standing committee, he said there is no doubt in his mind that the real reason for Bill C-51 is to coerce and intimidate Indigenous peoples from defending and protecting their hard-fought international rights expressed in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous

Peoples, the section 35 rights of the Canadian Constitution, and the battles won through legal challenge up to the Supreme Court of Canada.

"This bill will criminalize pretty much everything that has brought us to this point in our history, in terms of being able to assert our rights, and ensure that our rights are fully protected."

He said a lot of First Nations history would have been lost if the legislation would have been introduced 40 years ago.

He testified that the Supreme Court decision in the *Tsilhqot'in* case repudiates the notion of *Terra Nullius* ("land belonging to no one"), the doctrine of discovery, and rules that Indigenous jurisdictional interests are territory wide in scope. That puts First Nations on a "collision course" with major resource development projects, which are the "heart and soul of the Harper government."

Phillip said Bill C-51 targets threats to the economic stability of the country and therefore casts a shadow over the notion of what represents terrorism in the legislation. And that's not good for Indigenous peoples under C-51.

Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde wants the legislation pulled completely, and has vowed to launch a constitutional challenge. He said there has been no consultation with first people's on the legislation.

"We believe in safety and security, but the federal government's rush to ram this legislation through is undemocratic and it violates our individual and collective rights. First Nations will vigorously oppose any legislation that does not respect and protect our rights."

Green Party Leader Elizabeth May has been a strong opponent of the Bill. She said the language in the bill is so broad that it could apply to anything, "and certainly would cover those opposing pipelines and tankers," she wrote in an op-ed for the *Saanich News*.

"The propaganda section does not require knowing you are spreading propaganda, and "terrorist propaganda" itself has a definition so broad as to include a visual representation (a Che Guevara poster?) promoting a new concept called "terrorism in general." Experts are now referring to this as "thought chill," she wrote.

What about those beautiful Idle No More posters that were so effective during the movement? Will our artists now be labelled terrorists under C-51?

This is a dangerous road we're traveling on. We must all stand against this bill disguised as a security measure to protect Canadians. The target isn't on those who would threaten our security. The target is, in fact, on our own backs.

Windspeaker

[rants and raves]

Page 5 Chatter

A draft strategy on hydraulic fracturing produced by the Yukon government represents a breach of trust, said the Trondek Hwechin First Nation.

In a report by CBC, Chief Roberta Joseph said it came as a shock to learn what government was planning. Her nation, based in Dawson City, has passed a resolution stating it was opposed to fracking.

"This brings a real lack of trust when these things are being planned out without even sitting down, talking to First Nations," †said Joseph. The strategy document will endanger the relationship between the territorial government and First Nations, she said.

"The Yukon Party government basically has closed ears on Yukon people," she said, "in terms of how we want to ensure that we have a sustainable environment for future generations."

The Polotek First Nation in Chapel Island, N.S. wants a wooden

altar back that has been in an area church for a century, reports CTV Atlantic. Mi'kmaq Elders say the altar, rescued during a British attack on a French fort, was a gift from French missionaries in the late 18th century.

"The Natives took this from the church before it burned down and they hid it in the woods," said Mi'kmaq historian Lillian Marshall. It was later given or loaned to Fr. John MacDougall in Johnstown, N.S. in 1891.

"Somehow it was asked to be located here for safekeeping and it has been here ever since," said Gail Johnson at Sacred Heart Church. "The parishioners here, of course we love the altar, and it's been here for all these years."

But Mi'kmaq leaders want it returned.

"It's been here long enough. We had it over 100 years before that, and they had it over 100 years," said Potlotek Chief Wilbert Marshall. He wants it back by spring.

The Makah Tribe of Washington State has applied for another

whale hunt, requesting to take up to five grey whales per year for ceremonial and subsistence purposes. The Makah tribe historically hunted whales, and the 1855 Treaty of Neah Bay protects their right to continue the hunt. In 1999, the Makah took a whale officially, and in 2007 Makah charged five members for whaling outside their management plan. The U.S. government is currently seeking public comment on the request.

Beardy's & Okemasis First Nation and Nibinamik First Nation

have purchased shares in NativeOne Financial Holdings LLC, and gained a presence on Wall Street's New York Stock Exchange. NativeOne is the only Native-owned broker-dealer with such a seat. It gives the nations a major voice in mining developments in Canada, reports Associated Press.

"This gives them a lot more leverage," said Dennis Smith, co-founder of NativeOne. "That has not happened on behalf of many First Nations of Canada. They've been pushed around, pushed out of the way. Now as owners of a broker-dealer on the NYSE, they can demand a seat at the table and level the playing field."

Ovide Mercredi, the former national chief of the AFN, has been

elected the first Aboriginal president of the NDP in the Manitoba party's history. Mercredi was endorsed by Premier Greg Selinger and was elected on the second ballot.

"I think it is a good indication that Selinger's endorsement made a big difference in my election," Mercredi said after he won, adding he had only decided to run late Friday afternoon.

A federal court decision sided with the Haida Gwaii and ruled

that the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans cannot open a herring fishery in the territory this year. The Haida were granted an injunction that prevented the re-opening of a commercial herring fishery on the nation's north coast.

"This win is another step to building herring stocks, and in doing so, contributes to an economy that will provide a reasonable living for our people, and the path of reconciliation with Canada," said Haida Nation President Peter Lantin in a statement.

The Haida insists the herring stocks have not rebuilt enough to support an opening, and that the department's management process was flawed. A similar argument put forward by the Nuu-chah-nulth in a separate court hearing for the herring stocks on the West Coast of Vancouver Island was lost and the commercial herring industry was allowed to go forward.

The First Nations Health Authority, Simon Fraser University,

and St. Paul's Hospital Foundation have established the First Nations Health Authority Chair in Heart Health and Wellness at St. Paul's Hospital. The position, the first of its kind in Western Canada, will offer a holistic focus on cardiac health, and put First Nations communities in the driver's seat of heart health research.

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A peace of the reaction

I was driving down the main street of Peterborough, Ont. when I saw it. It had been sitting there for years I'm told, a nondescript shop selling a wide set of accoutrements for those who enjoy smoking a variety of substances. I believe they are called head or bong shops.

I make no judgement on the recreational activity, but up until now, I never bothered to notice the actual name of the store. That's where the issue lies. The establishment was called The Peace Pipe.

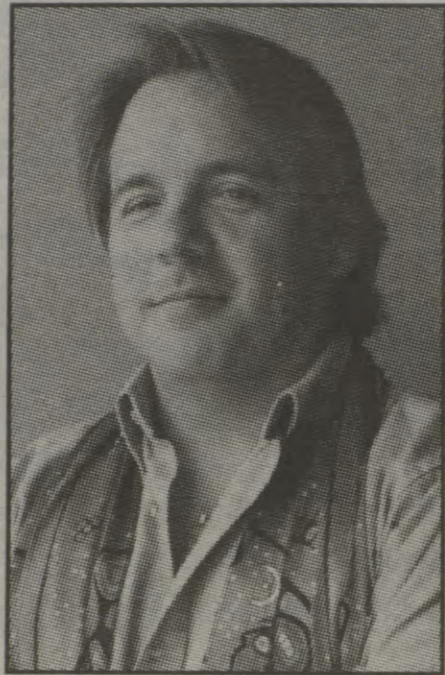
I found myself doing an old fashioned comedic 'double take' when I saw it, which is not a good thing to do while driving down a busy main street.

The reason for the 'double take' is I am Native—Anishnawbe to be specific—and the Peace Pipe (we actually refer to it simply as the Pipe) is a sacred part of many Aboriginal cultures.

Frequently it is used to begin sacred and important events or occasions. The tobacco used in these rituals is also one of the three sacred herbs, the others being cedar, sweetgrass and sage.

Those who carry a Pipe, logically called a Pipe Carrier, consider it a great honor. So needless to say, it was not meant for recreational purposes.

To top things off, the logo of



THE URBANE INDIAN
Drew Hayden Taylor

the store is that of a muscular Indian man with the stereotypical war bonnet emerging from the bowl of the Pipe. It was sheer cliché.

Still driving, I found myself going 'hmmm'. I was trying to imagine how anybody could have thought this was a fabulous marketing idea.

I am aware that Native people have long been associated with smoking, since it is we who first cultivated tobacco. I don't think I have ever seen a smoke shop without the fabled cigar store Indian standing guard out front, the patron saint of smokers it seems.

But this was different. This seemed to be a bit of profaning the sacred. Cultural

appropriation of the most unpleasant manner. In plain terms, disrespectful.

Any different, I wonder, than opening a wine shop, urging the customers to sample the 2015 'Blood of Christ'. Try the Savage Nun... I mean the Sauvignon.

Or perhaps an Islamic investment agency titled 'The Prophet's Profit'. Opening a restaurant called PETA, short for People Eating Tasty Animals. As I said, it can make you uncomfortable.

Yes, I realize it's a play on words in its own way, the kind of peace that can come from the use of certain plants and so on, but truly, I do not believe that is the kind of peace that was originally (or Aboriginally)

intended.

Still, in these politically correct times, one would think a little more thought might have gone into the naming of their shop, or shops in this case, as there are three other stores located in Newmarket, Oshawa and Toronto.

Perhaps they were using some of their own product when it occurred to one of them 'Hey, let's name it after a sacred symbol of the First Nations spirituality. Maybe nobody will notice. Or they will feel flattered that we named a store selling things called bong, dirty ricos, crystal fogs, and Herbies after one of their most sacred implements.'

I wonder if Native people even get a discount.

Using a clever play on words is old news in the retail business. I understand that. There is another business just outside Peterborough that caters to the needs of local pets. It's called The Paw Spa. Even in my own community, there is a cigarette shop called Smoke Signals. I find those clever and amusing.

I remember once attending a powwow and seeing a food stand with the name Nish Chalet, 'Nish' being a colloquial term for First Nations people. But I don't believe the actual Swiss Chalet is in anyway a religious or spiritual representation, though

their sauce is divine.

Perhaps I am being too politically correct. It's possible. There are some who have political issues with Thanksgiving, long considered one of the first North American potlucks. But soon afterwards, luck changed and we lost the pot.

I have mentioned the name and contents of this store to several other people of Aboriginal ancestry and they too go 'hmmm'.

Admittedly, sometimes you just want to give the finger to P.C. inspired perceptions. Recently I gave a keynote at the University of Victoria on Native humor.

Because it is a form of survival humor and is reflective of 500 years of colonization, our funny bone can sometimes test the boundaries of acceptability.

Especially in an academic environment, evidently. For that, I got my wrist slapped. Yet ironically, there seems to be a lot of bong shops in lower B.C. Hmmm...

So, my question is: Is naming a shop that specializes in selling equipment for the recreational use of various substances The Peace Pipe any different than say calling a woman's entrepreneurial organization The Eager Beavers? I wouldn't think so.

Orca Chief brings Indigenous wisdom to oceans under threat

By Shayne Morrow
Windspeaker Writer

B.C. storytellers Roy Henry Vickers and Robert "Lucky" Budd will be launching the third in a series of illustrated Northwest Coast legends on April 25.

Titled Orca Chief, it takes its place alongside their previous bestsellers Raven Brings the Light (2013) and Cloudwalker (2014).

For Vickers, already a renowned First Nations artist, the series has been a chance to merge his artwork with the oral histories he has shared with audiences across Canada for the past 30 years.

"The goal was to set down another story that I've been telling for years and years," he explained. "The three books that are out now, including Orca Chief, are old ancient legends that I have grown up with."

While the legend is ancient, the message it carries is especially timely, with the twin threats of global warming and energy extraction looming over the B.C. coastline.

Vickers and Budd have publicly expressed their opposition to both the Northern Gateway and Keystone XL pipeline projects, and have

drawn on the power of the moral fable to promote the goal of marine conservation and respect for the environment.

Budd, author of Voices of British Columbia, said he first approached Vickers about creating a book series after hearing one of his storytelling sessions at his Eagle Aerie Gallery in Tofino.

"I recorded one of his storytelling sessions and got really excited and said, 'Look, we have a series of four books here.'"

Budd said that while the Orca Chief legend has been adapted for the book, it remains true to its original intent.

"These are all oral legends that we have spun with our own interpretation. But the message has been the message for thousands of years. We haven't changed the message of any of these stories. We're just bringing them out at a time where it is just as topical now and the values are just the same as when they were told thousands of years ago."

One spring, thousands of years ago, four hunters leave the village of Kitkatla to harvest seaweed and sockeye salmon. When the hunters damage the seabed with their anchor, they are summoned to the underwater realm of the Orca

Chief to face the consequences.

There, the hunters ask the chief for forgiveness and apologize for failing to show respect for his kingdom. In response, Orca Chief sends the hunters out with his pod to learn how to sustainably harvest the ocean's resources.

Orca Chief reflects the environmental ethics of Indigenous cultures from time immemorial. The four hunters must confront the fact that, if they are to survive, they must kill and consume living creatures which are made by the same creator.

In asking the Orca Chief for forgiveness, they are recognizing his sovereignty over the ocean's bounty. In return, the chief delivers the second lesson: while you are permitted to harvest from the sea, you must exercise stewardship to ensure survival for all.

Budd said children, especially, can relate to the animal imagery and supernatural events in Orca Chief.

"They don't have any problem that the whales can talk and that the Orca Chief can behave and speak like a human. That's a way of communicating a message of compassion, a message of forgiveness, and a message of 'We're going to educate you — you better pay attention.'"

But first, the hunters must apologize for their ignorance and demonstrate their willingness to learn, Budd added.

"You still have to eat, and you still have to feed your village. But you do it in a respectful way and find a way to not take more than you need. These have been the values of Coast First Nations for thousands of years."

For Indigenous peoples through history, these lessons of respect and of living as part of a unified ecosystem were basic to human survival.

"On the Northwest Coast, you learn about people fishing and finding the biggest fish and letting it go. It's not a matter of the prize in getting the biggest fish. It's about, 'If I let this one go, it will eventually breed and we will have lots of good, big beautiful fish.' You don't take the biggest and best one. Those are part of the core values."

That is in contrast to the trophy hunter who seeks the biggest and best specimen to hang on the wall.

"Once it's done, it's over," Budd said.

"You're doing it in a way that is not respectful to the people or to the animals or to the air or anything else. You are operating in a vacuum. And it is the same story as for thousands of years:

everything is connected to everything else. You can't take something from one place and expect that it's not going to hurt somewhere else."

For their part, Vickers and Budd have joined the movement to promote the lessons and the historic Indigenous wisdom of West Coast First Nations.

"That's what oral history is. It adapts to tensions in the culture," Budd said. "To us, this is our link in the chain. This is not the end of it. With any luck, people will be telling these stories thousands of years from now and the lessons will be the same. It's an honor for us to take our part in it."

The book contains 19 never-before-seen artworks by Vickers to bring the dazzling undersea world to life. And as in Raven Brings the Light and Cloudwalker, there is a link to a website where the reader can download additional material including a retelling of the original Orca Chief legend by Vickers, as he performs it in live appearances.

Orca Chief is published by Harbour Publishing and is set for release on April 25. In May, The Orca Chief tour will visit cities across B.C., including Courtenay, Duncan, Nanaimo and Victoria, Kelowna, Penticton and Vancouver.

First Nations rally against anti-terrorism legislation

By Barb Nahwegahbow
Windspeaker Contributor

TORONTO

More than 1,000 people gathered on March 14 at Nathan Phillips Square to stand against Bill C-51, the federal government's anti-terrorism bill.

There was a strong Aboriginal presence at the rally that was organized by, among others, civil liberties groups, unions and Idle No More organizers.

Elizabeth May, the leader of the federal Green Party, as well as several members of the NDP were present to voice their concerns against the proposed legislation. Noticeably absent was Liberal Party representatives.

Cree Elder Pauline Shirt, conducted the ceremonial opening of the rally. Shirt vowed to continue fulfilling her responsibilities as a protector of the water and defender of the land.

Twenty-two-year-old Vanessa Gray from Aamjiwnang First Nation told the crowd that Bill C-51 and "the Harper government will never stop me from speaking up for the land, for environmental justice and for future generations of all peoples."

Gray's community, known as Chemical Valley, is located on the shores of the St. Clair River in Southwestern Ontario. Aamjiwnang is bordered on three sides by Canada's largest petrochemical refining concentration - 40 per cent of Canada's petrochemical refineries. Because of this, environmental and health issues are major concerns for the community.

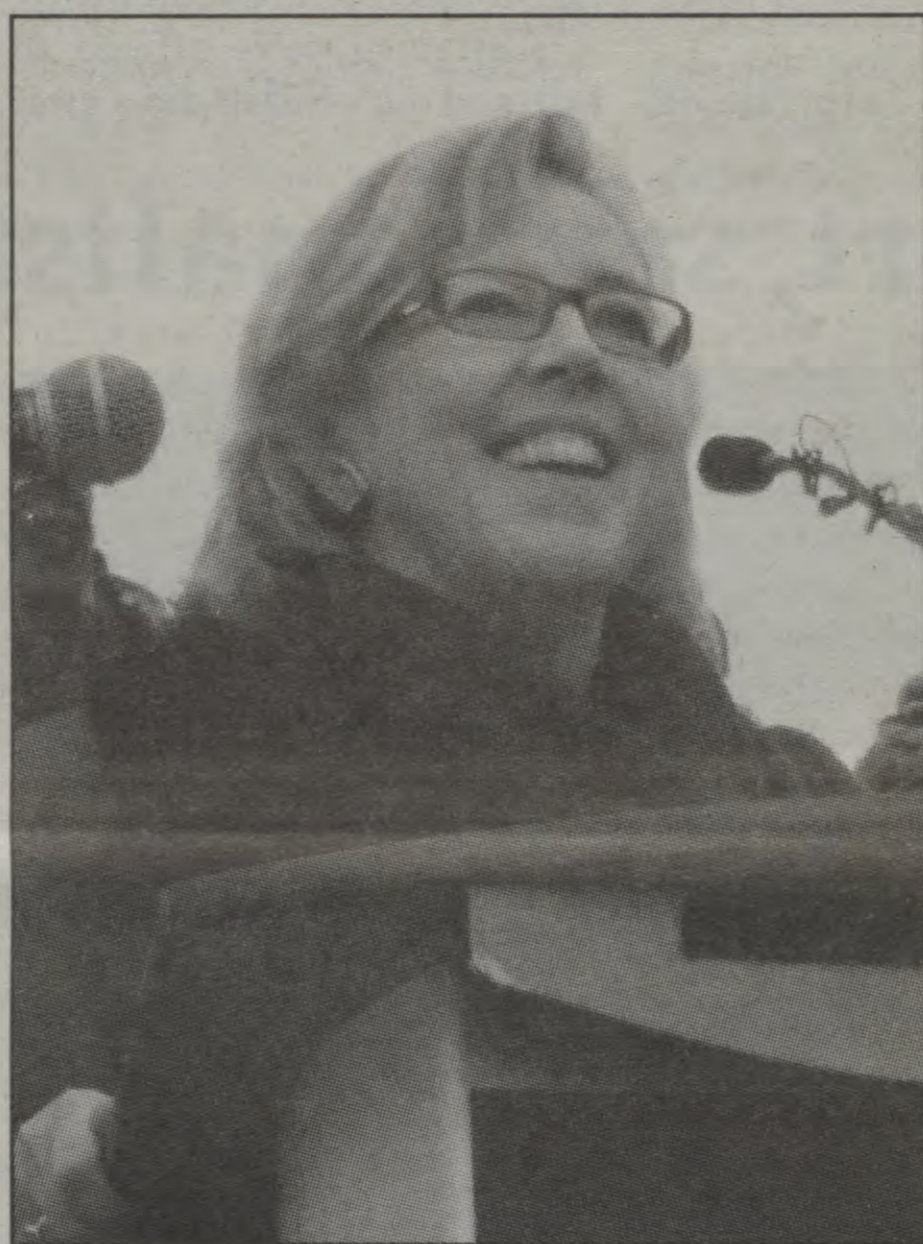
In an interview before her talk, Gray said, "The only reason why the politicians are hiding behind this bill is because we are being effective with organizing large groups of people against the corporations continuing to create health issues in communities like mine."

Bill C-51, said Gray, "is going to affect our ability to speak out for the land, to speak out for our



PHOTOS: BARB NAHWEGAHBOW

Elder Pauline Shirt doing the opening prayer for the Toronto rally against Bill C-51, May 14.



Elizabeth May, leader of the Green Party speaking at Toronto Rally Against Bill C-51, March 14.



Vanessa Gray, youth activist from Aamjiwnang First Nation speaking at the Toronto Rally against Bill C-51, March 14.

rights because it is Canadian infrastructure that is on stolen land and is continuously affecting our health. We need to stop it."

People are very much afraid of the proposed Bill C-51, said Gray.

"They're afraid of the secret

police. I think they're afraid of having no privacy and no rights.

And this is just giving the police more powers because Harper believes in police rights instead of environmental rights and women's rights and the freedom of speech. It's a fascist state that

we are told is a democracy," Gray said.

She received resounding applause at the end of her talk when she said, "This is Turtle Island and let's never let the Canadian government forget that!"

Victory for Darlene Necan

By Barb Nahwegahbow
Windspeaker Contributor

TORONTO

Two days after Darlene Necan talked to a Toronto audience about the daily desperation of poverty and homelessness in Northern Ontario, she got some much-needed good news.

Necan, a member of the Ojibway First Nation of Sauguen #258 in northwestern Ontario, had been charged by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) for building a home on her family's land in nearby Savant Lake.

In October 2013, MNRF issued a stop-work order claiming she was building on Crown land.



Darlene Necan

Necan was determined to have her day in court to protect her right to build on her family's traditional land and scored a major victory on March 19 when the province announced it would drop the charges against her. She had been facing tens of thousands of dollars in fines, along with ongoing homelessness.

A statement issued by CUPE 3903 First Nations Solidarity Working Group on March 19 said, "In a context of thousands of missing and murdered Indigenous women, the MNRF put Darlene in a position of having to search for shelter each day, hitchhiking from place to place, without any kind of safety and security."

Necan said, "I saw the

desperation of people as I did my walk of being impoverished and homeless with nowhere to live." The poverty she experienced and the drinking and drug use that she observed made her feel, "like I was just re-walking what I used to be a long time ago when I was drinking too."

"I learned a lot throughout the last winter," she said, "how desperate our people are as a whole." Instead of helping people make a change for the better, Necan said, the system keeps them homeless and impoverished.

"Everyone gets their cheque at the beginning of the month," she said, "and they're all paid up their rent, and then the food. So they buy enough food for maybe the

Green Party leader, Elizabeth May, warned the audience not to believe Stephen Harper on Bill C-51.

"This bill will not make us safer," May said. "This bill will increase the threat of terrorism while at the same time, as a bonus for Stephen Harper, trampling our rights and freedoms."† The NDP and the Greens stand in solidarity against C-51, she said.

May said Harper is a miracle worker, because he has united many groups over the bill.

"There are four former Prime Ministers, six former Chief Justices of the Supreme Court of Canada, over 100 experts in law from academia and the practice of law, the First Nations of this country, united with the editorial board of everything from the National Post to the Toronto Star and the Globe and Mail and papers from across this country and the Green Party standing united to stop this bill.

"So what does that tell us about Stephen Harper's miracle-working powers?" Only one thing was missing, she said, and that is Justin Trudeau, the federal Liberal Party leader.

"This Bill will make it much more dangerous for those of us who oppose pipelines, absolutely!" May said. But C-51 is Harper's last mistake, she told the crowd.

"He wants Canadians to be scared out of our wits. He wants us to be scared of everyone - different cultures, different religions. He wants us to be divided and fearful. He wants us to be scared out of our wits. But Canadians will not be scared out of our rights," she said.

As a final note, May said the Bill has already violated section 35 of the constitutional rights of First Nations because there was no prior consultation.

When the speeches concluded, the protestors, led by John Fox, a member of Wikwemikong First Nation, marched along Queen Street and down University Avenue to Front Street. Indigenous women drummers were at the forefront of the march.

first 9-10 days of the month and after that, you're pretty well out for the rest of the month."

Going to food banks, while it is an alternative (and Necan recognized the kindness of people who donate), it's not always a nutritious alternative.

"You get expired food," she said, "and it's always like beans or pasta, but never really anything to go with it."

"The system is always keeping us down," Necan said, "and living is hard." She spoke about a single mother with a five-year-old daughter living with no furniture, and not able to afford pots, pans and dishes to even prepare her own meals.

(See *Victory* on page 9.)

Chief accuses governments of ongoing paternalism

By Shari Narine
Windspeaker Contributor

SASKATOON

A war of words has erupted between the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations' Interim Chief Kim Jonathan and high ranking members of the provincial government.

Jim Reiter, minister responsible for First Nations, Metis and Northern Affairs, is accusing Jonathan of "splitting hairs" over concerns that FSIN wasn't included in discussions on a draft agreement for providing emergency services to reserves. The federal and provincial governments worked together on the draft.

"I just feel that if her main concern is simply that she wasn't engaged soon enough, I would suggest that's just splitting hairs," Reiter told reporters after question period on March 23.

Jonathan said the approach undertaken by the federal and provincial governments, to strike a bilateral agreement for emergency services without First Nations input, underscores all interactions with First Nations.

"This paternalistic approach is all too familiar to First Nations and has not produced any meaningful improvements in our collective health, well-being or quality of life in the past century and a half," Jonathan said in a news release.

The discussion between Jonathan and the provincial government, most of which has been carried out in the media, became heated following the deaths of two children on the Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation. The neighbouring village of Loon Lake did not respond to the fire call Feb. 17 from the First Nation, having cut off its services due to outstanding emergency services bills.

Just over a week later, Premier Brad Wall told reporters that the tragedy "underscores the need for leadership" in First Nations communities. He did praise the Saskatoon Tribal Council for undertaking a review of fire protection services in its seven communities, saying, "That's the kind of leadership we need."

Wall's comments solicited the first volley from Jonathan.

"That any leader would exploit the deaths of innocent children and use a tragedy such as this to attack all First Nations leaders is inherently wrong and truly unfortunate. To suggest that First Nations leaders are not concerned about the safety and well-being of their citizens is baseless. Had Premier Wall shown true leadership by discussing these issues directly with First Nations, he would have found that action is being taken," she said.

Now, words are being

exchanged over an agreement that would see the province receive federal funding of \$1 million in each of 10 years to cover fixed costs the province already incurs when providing emergency management and fire safety services on reserve. Jonathan has accused the province of taking "Indian moneys."

"The impression this could leave is that the province has an interest in receiving federal money at the expense of First Nations. I can say categorically that I would not support this approach," said Reiter, in a lengthy, strongly worded letter to Jonathan dated March 8.

Reiter also said that the draft agreement, which he stresses has not been signed, was shared with Jonathan and he asked for her input, which he said he would take to his federal counterpart.

"Certainly we've offered to help and our officials did a great

deal of working with federal officials to come up with a draft agreement that we think can help us enhance our resources so we can put people in place, experts that can help with education and training for fire response on reserve, possibly facilitating agreements with neighbouring municipalities," said Reiter.

Instead, Jonathan has suggested that the \$10 million be given directly to First Nations.

"Rather than ongoing paternalism from the federal and provincial governments, First Nations need true partnerships to effect meaningful change. †First Nations need cooperation and call upon the federal and provincial governments to support the development of a technical service provider that will enable Tribal Councils to deliver essential services to First Nations, by First Nations," said Jonathan.

Resource report falls short, say panalists

By Shari Narine
Windspeaker Contributor

EDMONTON

There is no ringing endorsement from Collette Arcand for a report on natural resource development released early March by an independent working group consisting of representatives from the Assembly of First Nations and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

Advancing Positive, Impactful Change is the culmination of work begun in December 2013 and outlines ways in which First Nations can participate in and benefit from resource development on their land.

The report is missing a vital piece, said Arcand, who is senior regulator coordinator with Alexander Industry Relations Corporation of the Alexander First Nation in Alberta.

"I honestly expected more because I feel that this report fell short on recommendations when it comes to the duty to consult, because it did skip right over (it) to benefit, which is all part of accommodation. So what about consultation and what about compensation under accommodation?" asked Arcand.

She offered her comments as part of a five-member panel at the University of Alberta which discussed the relationship of the oil economy with Indigenous peoples.

The closest *Advancing Positive, Impactful Change* comes to consultation is in the recommendation of "engaging early, engaging often."

Former United Nations Special Rapporteur Dr. James Anaya, who joined Arcand on



PHOTO: SHARI NARINE

University of Alberta communications and recruitment coordinator Jodi Stonehouse moderates a panel discussion on Exploring the Relationship of the Oil Economy with Indigenous Peoples and their Rights and Responsibilities (from left): Danika Littlechild, Collette Arcand, Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez, Andrew Leach and James Anaya.

the panel, also emphasized the importance of consultation, stating that Indigenous peoples needed to be involved from the beginning of the process. He also stressed the importance of Indigenous control of territory.

"There needs to be new models of development put in place," said Anaya. In August 2013, Anaya tabled a report with the UN Human Rights Council addressing issues relating to extractive industries and the implications they have for the rights of Indigenous peoples.

"I believe a meaningful choice can only come about if Indigenous people have options."

A full range of options must be taken into consideration, he

said, which would mean a choice in inviting industry to develop on First Nations lands, partnering with industry in development, or First Nations operating their own development companies. And for Indigenous people to be fully engaged, they need to have support for capacity building, education, preferences for licensing, and access to capital, he added.

But Indigenous peoples also need to be able to say no to extractive resource development, Anaya said, and be able to consider other types of development – or no development at all.

"The best chance companies have to succeed... is to respect Indigenous peoples' rights. If

government and companies are going to try to force themselves on these territories and not fully respect Indigenous peoples' rights, there's only going to be continuous conflict," he said.

Panelist Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez compared the situation of Indigenous people in Canada with those in Mexico. The U of A political scientist said Indigenous peoples' traditional livelihood is being demeaned by governments and corporations, who continue to push for development.

Arcand believes that *Advancing Positive, Impactful Change* continues along that vein.

"What I believe this (report) does is supplement the political agenda that continues to

promote the misconception that the only way to a better life for First Nations is through the acceptance of this northern Albertan economy," she said.

The report is co-chaired by AFN Alberta Regional Chief Cameron Alexis and New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island Regional Chief Roger Augustine.

"We strongly urge that the next roundtable focus exclusively on resource revenue sharing, an urgent and pressing issue for this country and all First Nations," the report states in the executive summary.

But resource revenue sharing is not a path provinces have embraced, said Arcand.

Two recent meetings held between Alberta Premier Jim Prentice, who also serves as Aboriginal Relations minister, and department Associate Minister David Dorward with chiefs from Treaty 6 and Treaty 8 underscore this point.

"Alberta has no policy on resource revenue sharing, those words, but we certainly have a desire to have all Albertans, including First Nations people, be involved in the downstream result of the development of Alberta's resources," said Dorward.

Advancing Positive, Impactful Change outlines a number of recommendations, including the development of a central knowledge and information resource. It would make technical information and advisory services available to First Nations to assist them in natural resource development, and developing models for collaboration among First Nations to pursue joint venture opportunities.

Families given priority at national roundtable

By Shari Narine
Windspeaker Contributor

OTTAWA

The national roundtable on murdered and missing Indigenous women held in Ottawa Feb. 27 resulted in little concrete action, but it has still given hope to one long-time activist.

"For the first time in any incident that I'm aware of have the police, the government, the social services agencies, have anyone recognized the pain and suffering encountered by the families," said Muriel Stanley Venne.

Stanley Venne attended the roundtable as the representative for the Metis Nation of Alberta. "The emphasis was totally on the families. They were given priority."

Stanley Venne, founder of the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women, points out that from the poorly-run investigation into the brutal death of Cree student Helen Betty Osborne, killed in The Pas in 1971 with her murderer not convicted until 1987 when the case was re-opened, to the Pickton murders in British Columbia, Aboriginal women and their families have been treated with little respect or empathy.

"I was so optimistic to see the families recognized because, in my experience, ... that hasn't been there," said Stanley Venne. "But what I'm not aware of is how is it going to move forward?"

Stanley Venne wants to ensure that the change in attitude toward victims and their families continues. She said there needs to be some way to measure the consistency in attitude change and the treatment of Indigenous families.

"It means nothing if this change is just for the meeting in Ottawa, then we go home and things are just the same," she said.

Victory for Darlene Necan

(Continued from page 7.)

This young Aboriginal mother on welfare experiences racism and discrimination from landlords, she said.

Necan herself, as a homeless person, receives \$240 monthly. She puts this money towards purchasing food wherever she stays.

"You can't just go there and eat," she said, "because they too have no food because the only people I interact with is my family in Thunder Bay and a lot of them are impoverished." We're all struggling, she said.

People depending on the system live in fear of getting cut off, she said.

The lack of an action plan has been one criticism following the conclusion of the national roundtable, which was attended by federal ministers Bernard Valcourt, minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, and Kellie Leitch, minister for Status of Women, government delegates from all provinces and territories, along with representatives from a wide range of Aboriginal groups.

They agreed on a framework for prevention and awareness, policing and community safety initiatives. Manitoba Premier Greg Selinger said his province would host a meeting of police organizations and justice officials from across the country to discuss ways to address the problem of murdered and missing women. However, once more, the federal government refused to commit to a national inquiry.

The push for a national inquiry is now being endorsed by a second United Nations report in as many years.

On March 6, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, released a scathing report on the socio-economic, cultural and political factors impacting Aboriginal women in Canada, and said the lack of effective action taken to address these core issues, which lead to violence, constituted a "grave violation" of human rights for Aboriginal women and girls.

The committee also called for a national public inquiry "which must be fully independent from the political process and transparent" with the findings used to develop a national action plan.

Former UN Special Rapporteur James Anaya made that same call in his May 2014 report, in which he also said the Canadian government was not doing enough to improve the economic, living, and social conditions of Indigenous

peoples, despite having mechanisms in place. Anaya had been in Canada the previous year on a whirlwind tour.

While he had not had a chance to read the CEDAW report, Anaya, who was in Edmonton in March, said, "In my report, I said that this (issue of murdered and missing Aboriginal women) was one of the most serious problems in Canada and it deserved heightened and more attention than the government at that time was giving to it. If a national inquiry has any chance of helping spur greater and more focused, more targeted, more effective action then it should be done. From everything I hear, a national inquiry would help in that way. Unless things have changed, I think that call should be heeded."

Calls for national inquiries have also come from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (coalition of advocacy groups, Indigenous organizations, and family members) in January, while the Human Rights Watch raised its voice in January 2014, also calling for the creation of a system for greater accountability for Canadian police misconduct.

The night before the national roundtable, the Legal Strategy Coalition on Violence against Indigenous Women released an account of 58 studies, reports and inquiries outlining 700 recommendations, with only a handful of those recommendations having been implemented by any level of government.

A report from the RCMP released last year showed nearly 1,200 Aboriginal women went missing or were murdered in Canada between 1980 and 2012. Statistics Canada reports Aboriginal women and teenagers are 3.5 times more likely to experience violence than non-Aboriginal women and three times as likely to be victims of domestic violence.

"People don't want you to stay at their place because you're not bringing in anything."

"I walk around Thunder Bay, look at other people's houses and wish I had my own house. Wish I would have been allowed to build my own house," Necan said. "I wouldn't have to depend on welfare and if I was at home, I would have went fishing, would have went partridge hunting. I would have went rabbit snaring and moose hunting. I would have done all that."

After her victory, Necan will be able to do all of those things and provide for herself.

"I can't wait to move into my

house," she said. "Even though there's no heat, no hydro, it's my own house. I can't wait."

Mike Leitold, a lawyer who has been working with Darlene for the past couple of years, had this to say on March 19 about her case:

"The strong stand taken by Darlene Necan in this matter is inspiring as it shows the power of grassroots action and solidarity to win victories for oppressed people. It is only right that the charges against her have been dropped, as she is rebuilding her home on her traditional territory. I hope her victory encourages all of us to fight against ongoing colonial oppression."

Windspeaker News Briefs

A book on Northern Tutchone beadwork will be published

this summer by the Na-Cho Nyak Dun First Nation. *Come Walk With Me* will showcase the patterns and designs used by different First Nations in the region in their beadwork and slipper making. "You can see how those beading styles and traditions and culture have influenced the beading styles that are currently in the community," said heritage manager Joella Hogan. The book will feature new beadwork from Elders and historical photographs of beadwork.

Mikmaq lawyer and professor Pam Palmater

said the federal government is tracking her activism. She said access-to-information documents reveal that she is being surveilled by three federal government departments.

"I wrote an access to information request to CSIS (the Canadian Security Intelligence Service), National Defence, the RCMP and Indian Affairs to determine whether or not they were following (or) surveilling me in any way and three out of the group all confirmed that they were," she told CTV Question Period during a discussion about Bill C-51, the anti-terrorism legislation. Palmater is concerned the bill's wording casts a wide net that will capture First Nations and environmental activists, branding legitimate title and rights protests under the terror banner.

The Na-Cho Nyak Dun, Champagne Aishihik, Teslin Tlingit Council and Vuntut Gwitchin First Nations Yukon

celebrated 20 years of self-government March 19 in Whitehorse. "We Yukon First Nations should be immensely proud our people have survived hundreds of years of social disruption and forces of oppression that were trying to ultimately assimilate and eradicate us. And yet here we are. We have endured," said Kristina Kane, chief of the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. Carl Sidney, chief of the Teslin Tlingit Council, said many promises of self-government are yet to be fulfilled.

"It is our dream and our hope that within another 20 years we can have what we negotiated 20 years ago. Which is a government recognized by the other governments in Canada, and that our youth will be recognized and given all the opportunities that were envisioned when we started negotiating 30 years ago," he said.

Alberta First Nations and two levels of government agreed

agreed March 20 to a 10-year extension of an emergency management agreement. The agreement covers 45 First Nations in the province. Ottawa's contribution is \$14.6 million. The agreement allows for the employment of four First Nations field officers plus a manager, and they will provide on-site training. The Alberta Emergency Management Agency continues to provide assistance on reserves in the case of disaster under the agreement.

Grand Chief David Harper is under the gun for agreement

signed between Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak and the Nuclear Waste Management Organization for a study of nuclear waste storage and its impacts on the region. The Swampy Cree Tribal Council chided Harper for signing the agreement without their knowledge and confirmed their collective moratorium against nuclear energy and storage within Cree territory. "This moratorium follows previous resolutions against nuclear energy and storage passed at a Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Chiefs Assembly in Norway House in 2014. The majority of chiefs at the assembly passed MKO Resolutions #2014-0702, which specifically opposed nuclear storage in Manitoba." Harper said the agreement is only for educational purposes. "Even if we don't accept the money, we are still going to do the education project. We have to." Harper said a potential nuclear waste storage site in Ignace, Ont. may affect Manitoba lakes and rivers. "We need to know the extent. That is all we're looking for. We've never said we approve nuclear waste storage facilities, and we won't say that."

New Brunswick is making changes to improve consultation

with First Nations, said Premier Brian Gallant, with the training of one person, at least, in each department on the duty to consult. Governments wait too long before beginning consultations, said Gallant. In people's minds, it's energy projects that require consultation, but it's not limited to that. Any type of development, even the construction of a school, may impact a First Nation's territory, he explained.

The federal government is working to replace fuel tanks

that fall short of safety standards in remote reserve communities, but still have much left to do, with about 50 per cent still non-compliant. Documents show the government spent about \$61 million between April 2011 and May 2014 to bring 583 tanks into compliance to prevent spills and leaks. Aboriginal Affairs would like to have 750 tanks — "approximately 50 per cent of essential tanks on reserve" — in compliance with the regulations by next year, reports the Canadian Press.

Raven's Eye: Special Section providing news from BC & Yukon

The Heiltsuk First Nation

on B.C.'s Central Coast wants the sac roe herring fishery in their territory closed for conservation reasons. But Fisheries and Oceans Canada opened the fishery March 22 despite concerns. Heiltsuk said the move violates their constitutional rights.

"This action shows blatant disrespect of Aboriginal rights by DFO and industry," said Chief Councillor Marilyn Slett. And many have accused DFO of sly dealing, opening the seine fishery at 5 p.m. and only notifying the Heiltsuk a half-hour after the fishery had been opened.

"DFO provided inconsistent and misleading communications throughout the day and did not attempt meaningful consultation," said Slett. Heiltsuk vowed to shut down the gillnet fishery by placing lines in the way of fishers.

The province is under fire

for reneging on an agreement to appoint former Liberal cabinet minister George Abbott as chief of the B.C. Treaty Commission. After months of negotiating with First Nations groups, the B.C. cabinet decided at the 11th hour to nix the appointment, after Abbott had already begun the transition to his new job, which was to begin April 1.

The First Nations Summit said it was "taken aback and seriously disappointed" by the decision. "The province's blatant disregard for agreement among the Principals and processes already undertaken is unacceptable," reads a press release from the Summit. "This situation raises questions about our ability to rely upon agreements made among the Principals and the provincial government's commitment to treaty negotiations in BC and to achieving reconciliation with First Nations."

Outgoing chief commissioner Sophie Pierre wrote a press release critical of the province. "George Abbott is a man of integrity, intelligence and extensive experience who would have benefited the treaty process, First Nations and all British Columbians," Pierre said.

"This retraction of the chief commissioner selection after months of agreement, expectation and reliance by the other parties raises questions about B.C.'s commitment to the treaty negotiation process."

Abbott said he was offered the job last September by Aboriginal Relations Minister John Rustad. In a press release, Minister Rustad re-committed to the treaty process. "Our government is committed to working with First

Nations on the treaty negotiations process in British Columbia. There are a number of important treaty tables that are reaching milestones that will bring long-term reconciliation with the Crown to their communities. However, I have also heard from many First Nations that the treaty process, mandates and negotiations take far too long and they are looking for a better way.

"Finding lasting reconciliation and resolving the land-claim issues are of critical importance for all British Columbians. Now is the appropriate time to reflect with the Principals in the treaty process on what lies ahead for the BC Treaty Commission so that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities alike can prosper.

"While this dialogue continues we will work with the Principals to appoint a chief commissioner and ensure that the work of the BC Treaty Commission goes on."

The Tsilhqot'in Nation has enacted its first Tsilhqot'in law,

setting out the rules for how the Tsilhqot'in Nation will govern lands and manage access to the area and its resources. This falls on the heels of the first declaration of Aboriginal title in

Canadian history.

On June 26, 2014, the Supreme Court of Canada granted Aboriginal title to the Tsilhqot'in Nation in the area of the Xeni Gwet'in community. Aboriginal title includes the right to exclusive use and occupation of the land, as well as the right to the economic benefits of the land, and the ability to determine the uses to which the land will be put.

The Nemiah Declaration was first declared by the Xeni Gwet'in on August 23, 1989, in response to the threat of widespread clear-cut logging. That threat prompted two decades of litigation, culminating in recognition of Aboriginal title to about 1900 sq. km of land in the central interior of British Columbia.

The Nemiah Declaration is now the law governing the Aboriginal title lands and the broader territory over which the courts declared Aboriginal hunting, trapping and trading rights.

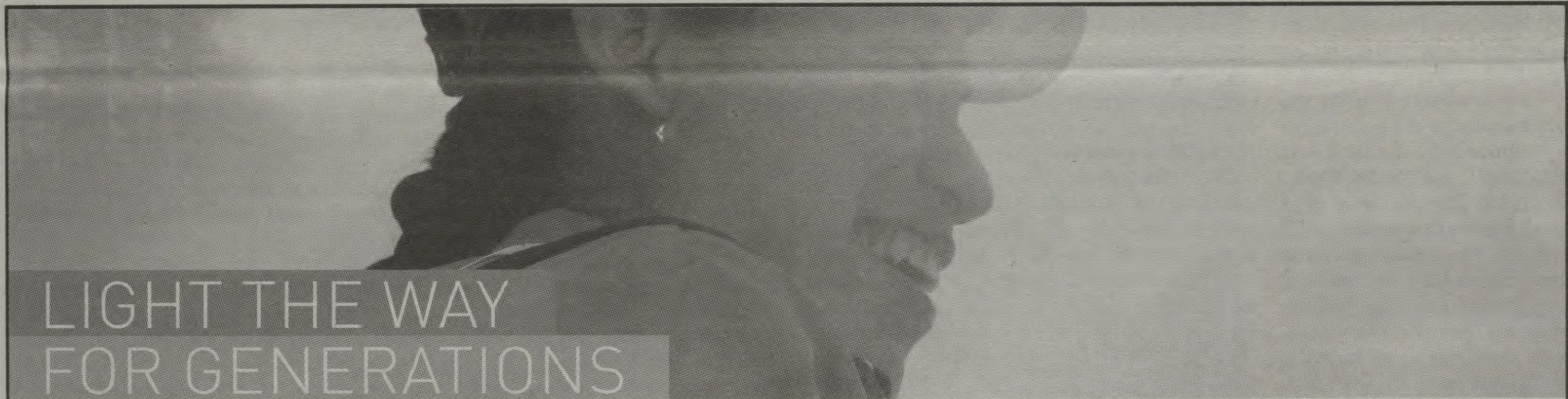
The Declaration outlines specific uses of the land that will not be authorized, along with how future laws, regulations and policies will be developed.

The Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB)

and Sodexo Canada announced that Penticton Indian Band

Development Corporation is the winner of the CCAB Aboriginal Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) Award for 2015. Penticton Indian Band Reserve is the largest reserve in the British Columbia. The Penticton Indian Band Development Corporation (PIBDC) is a for-profit corporation owned by the Penticton Indian Band and is the principal economic development, marketing and promotional organization for the band. PIBDC is the business investment vehicle pursuing business joint ventures and investment opportunities on behalf of Penticton Indian Band community and stakeholders that meet the established investment criteria developed by PIBDC.

"Congratulations to the Penticton Indian Band Development Corporation for demonstrating the vision and courage in the world of business essential for business success," said CCAB President and CEO JP Gladu. "The Aboriginal Economic Development Corporation of the Year Award proudly gives all Canadians an opportunity to learn more about Aboriginal business success and its role in creating business certainty and sustainable prosperity."



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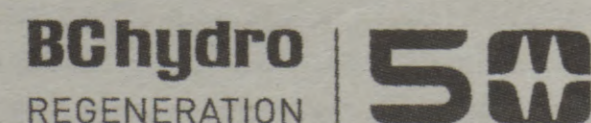
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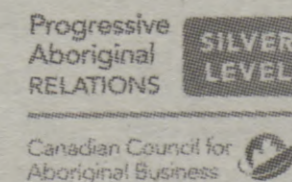
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Saskatchewan Sage: Special Section providing news from Saskatchewan

Funding for justice programs

Three Saskatoon Tribal Councils will receive \$537,990 in funding over two years for justice-related programs. Through its urban programs, the STC receives referrals for extrajudicial measures and sanctions for youth, assists victims of crime, and helps at-risk youth, their families, and the community to understand their rights, the justice system and family rebuilding processes. The funding will also aid youth in understanding and maintaining conditions imposed on them while in supervised mediation agreements. The rural programs include extrajudicial sanctions and alternative measures programming for youth and adults in six rural First Nation communities in the Saskatoon region. The measures include various culturally appropriate circles, victim/offender mediation, and diversion programs. The programs also deliver crime prevention and public education activities. The three STC programs, cost-shared with the province, are the STC Community Justice program and the Extrajudicial Measures program, and Opikinawasowin Reintegration Program.

Province increases aid for on-reserve students

The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education has evenly distributed \$2.4 million to support 16 invitational shared services initiative partnerships in 2014-15. ISSI partnerships provide students at on-reserve schools with the same supports available in provincial schools, such as speech language pathologists, math consultants and graduation coaches. The ministry asked Aboriginal education organizations to

identify what types of shared services were needed and worked together to develop partnerships with 11 school divisions. "We are committed to improving education and employment outcomes for First Nations and Métis people in response to the joint task force recommendations," said Education Minister Don Morgan. During 2013-14, the province invested \$1.5 million in 10 ISSI partnerships. In April 2013, the task force's final report was released by the provincial government and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, which focused on improving education and employment for First Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan.

Contract for solar projects for northern schools awarded

The contract has been announced for the turn-key design, supply and install of two solar power generation systems in Saskatchewan's far north at Father Megret Elementary School in Hatchet Lake Denesuline First Nation and Father Gamache Memorial School in Fond du Lac Denesuline First Nation. These two projects are designed to offset power consumption for each of the schools. Funding was secured from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, including the ecoENERGY for Aboriginal and Northern Communities Program, to install two roof-mounted 64 kilowatt solar photovoltaic power systems. Through a competitive request for proposals, FNPA received seven proposals and worked closely with leadership on the two First Nations to make the final selection. The total cost of the project is \$580,080 and

installation is scheduled to be completed in 2015. "These renewable power generation systems are important to First Nations communities to lower their power bills, increase the reliability of the electrical grid in remote areas and reduce their environmental footprint through reducing greenhouse gases. Also, the data obtained is incredibly important in assessing the potential for expanded solar power use in Canada's north," said FNPA CEO Leah Nelson Guay.

Whitecap Dakota chooses manager to help with new development partnership

A new partnership formed between Whitecap Development Corp. and PTW Energy Services Ltd. of Nisku, AB, will be managed by Tarpon Energy Services Ltd. The Whitecap Development Corp. is the business arm of Whitecap Dakota First Nation. This partnership will pursue electrical, instrumentation, construction and fabrication opportunities in the oil and gas and mining sectors within Saskatchewan. This is the second formal Aboriginal partnership for Tarpon. The Whitecap Development Corp. has been the economic engine that has fueled growth resulting in over \$100 million in capital investment and creating 700 jobs in the community. The Whitecap Development Corp. recently founded Whitecap Industrial Services, a new division that is comprised of world-class service providers that will focus on the mining, resources, oil and gas, and utilities sectors in Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan Polytechnic students to build homes

Saskatchewan Polytechnic students will soon help build affordable housing in Prince Albert through a partnership with Habitat for Humanity. The two organizations signed a memorandum of agreement in February that will see carpentry students work on one house a year for Habitat for Humanity. Under the five-year plan, the students will frame houses and install windows, exterior doors, siding, soffits and shingles. "Sask Polytech's partnership with Habitat for Humanity will provide students an opportunity to hone newly acquired skills, while at the same time contributing to the Prince Albert community in a meaningful way," said Dr. Larry Rosia, Saskatchewan Polytechnic president and CEO. Habitat for Humanity will fund materials for the homes and will be responsible for finishing work, aided by the families that will live in the homes. The partnership is expected to involve up to 60 students annually. Each year, Sask Polytech has about 900 carpentry and electrician students in Prince Albert and 2,500 across the province. Saskatchewan Polytechnic serves 26,000 distinct students through applied learning opportunities at campuses in Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Regina and Saskatoon, and through extensive distance education opportunities.

Prince Albert works on five-year strategy

Various service organizations, including Prince Albert Parkland Health Region, Prince Albert Police Service, Gabriel Dumont Institute, Prince Albert Métis Women's Association, met at the Prince Albert Indian Métis Friendship Centre in early March to identify barriers preventing urban

Aboriginal people from fully participating in the local economy. The Aboriginal population in Prince Albert has grown from 18 per cent in 2006 to nearly 25 per cent in 2011, and continues to grow. Engagement co-ordinator Cathi Wilson-Loescher noted a 20 per cent gap for the high school graduation rate between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people as well as a 20 per cent gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people participating in the labour force. "We're going to be developing a five-year strategy," Wilson-Loescher said. "This is one of the steps in the process to help us really understand local needs in Prince Albert and area."

Atchison runs between two First Nations to raise money, awareness

A combined fundraiser for charitable organizations and a physical fitness awareness campaign to be undertaken by Saskatoon Mayor Don Atchison on June 21 will highlight the Meewasin Trail / Trans Canada Trail that is being built. Atchison, who has been training for months, will cover the 54.72 km journey between Whitecap Dakota First Nation and Wanuskewin Heritage Park on foot. Atchison will start his journey at Whitecap early on the morning of June 21 and is anticipated to reach Wanuskewin in the early evening. Runners and walkers alike will be invited to join Atchison as he enters the city limits. The race will be timed, and participants will pay a fee to register and can raise pledges to support a charity of their choice.

Compiled by Shari Narine

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SPECIAL RATE ON MULTIPLE SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Ontario Birchbark: Special Section providing news from Ontario

Train derailment oil spill cause for concern

Ontario Regional Chief Stan Beardy says Canada's way of getting oil to market is in direct conflict with Indigenous rights and public safety. The statement comes after a second oil spill on Mattagami First Nation territory, the third CN derailment in northern Ontario in less than a month,

and the second near the First Nation community within three weeks. While calls for cooperation between Mattagami First Nation, Canadian National Railway and the federal and provincial governments seem to be focused on the investigation, mitigation and monitoring of the spill sites, Mattagami First Nation is not confident their

homelands have not suffered irreparable damage. Currently, no provisions are in place to notify or consult First Nations communities about the transportation of hazardous material like crude oil, spent fuel, and other radioactive material shipped through their traditional territories. First Nations in Ontario have expressed anger and concern

about the derailments taking place in the province over the past month.

Harm by third party management sparks lawsuit

The Algonquins of Barriere Lake (ABL) filed a lawsuit against the government and their current and previous third-party managing companies, Hartel Financial Management Corp. and BDO Canada. The lawsuit for \$30 million in damages claims that the government and managers have harmed the community "by mismanaging and withholding funds that were to be used for the benefit of the community and its members." The managers currently hold the ABL's money in a trust, according to ABL's press release, which places ABL community's funds out of their control. "We have requested information regarding our financial status and it was repeatedly refused or ignored," said Tony Wawatie, Barriere Lake's Interim Director-General, in a report by *The Daily*. This lawsuit comes after growing tension between the third-party management program and ABL. Last December, ABL sent out a press release calling for food and donations for 15 Algonquin families, including 25 children. The federal government had refused welfare cheques after ABL failed to comply with the First Nations Financial Transparency Act as a protest against the community's lack of control over its own finances under the third-party management system. Wawatie also said the infrastructure and training programs the managers were supposed to arrange for the community were never provided. Neither Hartel Corp. nor BDO will comment, citing the fact that the lawsuit is currently ongoing.

collaborative approach" said François Morin, senior advisor at Innergex. "We will not pursue a project without the appropriate level of support of the community."

New Gladue writers to help backlog

Legal Aid Ontario is expanding Gladue writing services in northeastern Ontario with funding to Aboriginal Legal Services in Toronto to hire Gladue writers for Windsor, Sudbury, North Bay and Sault Ste. Marie. Gladue reports provide background on the lives of Aboriginal people in conflict with the law. Jonathan Rudin with Aboriginal Legal Services in Toronto said hiring Gladue writers for the communities will reduce the long waiting list. "We've been advocating for this for a very, very long time, and we're very pleased that Legal Aid Ontario has stepped up," he said. Currently, ALST employs Gladue report writers in Toronto, Hamilton-Brantford-St. Catharines-Welland, Kitchener-Waterloo, Sarnia, Ottawa, Niagara, Barrie and Oshawa-Peterborough-Lindsay. Legal Aid Ontario said the positions are mainly provincially funded.

Métis youth receives heritage award

Métis youth Mélanie-Rose Frappier has received the Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award. The awards are presented annually to individuals, groups and communities that have made outstanding contributions to conserving Ontario's heritage. Frappier is involved in a range of youth, community and cultural activities that led ...cole secondaire du Sacré Cœur to nominate her for the Heritage Award in the Youth Achievement category. Frappier is proud of her francophone and Métis heritage and is the sole student representative for the Aboriginal Advisory Education Committee and was integral in creating the first Aboriginal Studies course to be offered in the French Catholic School Board. Last year, Frappier received the prestigious Canada's Top 20 Under 20 Award, which recognizes the exceptional leadership, innovation and achievements of 20 young people under the age of 20 from across the country. She is a recipient of the National Aboriginal Youth Achievement Award and the Gathering Our Voices Aboriginal Youth Award both of which recognized her outstanding leadership qualities and her dedication to improving her community. Last fall she participated in the Aboriginal Youth Panel at Toronto WE Day where she shared her pride in her Métis heritage. In 2013, Frappier was chosen to be Youth Ambassador of Canada to the United States Embassy.

Compiled by Shari Narine

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Development of Nodinosi prospective wind project to stop

Algonquins of the Pikwàkanagàn First Nation have joined with Innergex Renewable Energy Inc to stop further development of the Nodinosi prospective wind project located near Mattawa. The Nodinosi project was located in the townships of Phelps, Orlig and Mattawan of the Nipissing District. With a proposed installed capacity of approximately 150 MW, it was in the very early stages of development. "We strongly believe in a collaborative approach to project development, because social acceptability is essential to a successful project. The many concerns expressed by residents and local authorities have demonstrated that we do not have social acceptability for the Nodinosi project, nor the context to develop such a

Sports Briefs

Compiled by Sam Laskaris

NAIG Might Head To Toronto

Canada's most populous city might end up hosting the next North American Indigenous Games (NAIG).

That's because only one association, the Aboriginal Sport and Wellness Council of Ontario (ASWCO), submitted a letter of intent to bid on hosting the 2017 NAIG.

The deadline to submit a letter of intent to the NAIG Council to host the Games was Feb. 11.

ASWCO has identified Toronto as the host candidate city.

Despite being the lone bidder, ASWCO is not automatically awarded the rights to host the next NAIG.

The next step in the process is for ASWCO officials to prepare and submit a bid package by April 2.

This package must contain detailed information about how the host society would govern and manage the multi-sport competition.

The bid package must also contain details on the proposed operating budget, venues, as well as the sport and cultural programs that plan to be provided.

NAIG Council officials would need to review the bid package afterwards. Other steps before ASWCO could potentially be awarded the next NAIG include a site evaluation tour and a final bid presentation.

The NAIG Council would then vote on whether to award the Games to ASWCO.

If the 2017 NAIG are indeed held in Toronto it would mark the third straight time the Games have been held at a Canadian location.

More than 4,000 athletes took part at the last NAIG, staged last year in Regina. And prior to that, the 2008 NAIG were held in Cowichan, B.C.

The first games were in 1990 in Edmonton. The games have been contested a total of eight times so far.

Montour Signs Pro Contract

Brandon Montour has turned pro a bit sooner than some had anticipated. The 20-year-old Six Nations defenceman had been drafted in the second round, 55th over-all, by the Anaheim Ducks during last year's National Hockey League Entry Draft.

But Montour, who had spent last season starring in the United States Hockey League with the Iowa-based Waterloo Black Hawks, then began his NCAA collegiate career.

He was a member of the University of Massachusetts-Amherst squad this season. Though he missed the early portions of the season due to eligibility issues, Montour, who played 15 games less than some of his teammates, still ended up being the club's top scoring defenceman this season.

He averaged almost a point per game, earning 20 points (three goals, 17 assists) in 21 matches. No doubt supporters of the club were keen to see what Montour could accomplish in his three remaining seasons of collegiate eligibility.

Montour, however, has opted not to return to the school and ink a three-year entry level contract with the Ducks. He's already joined the Virginia-based Norfolk Admirals of the American Hockey League for the remainder of their season.

The Admirals are the Ducks' top affiliate club. Montour played his first pro game on March 18, as Norfolk eked out a 1-0 victory against the host Albany Devils.

Montour, who played three years of Junior B hockey in Ontario, has seen his career take off since heading south.

He had been bypassed by all clubs during the first two years he was eligible for the NHL Entry Draft. Pro squads began to seriously take note of his abilities while he was with the Black Hawks.

Montour was chosen as the USHL's Player of the Year after racking up 62 points in 60 games with his Waterloo squad. He was also the league's top scorer in the 2014 playoffs, earning 16 points, including a half-dozen goals in 12 contests.

Warriors Join Lacrosse League

An expansion Junior A lacrosse team that will operate in Nova Scotia this season is expected to feature a predominately Aboriginal lineup.

Officials with the Mi'kmaq Warriors anticipate up to 70 per cent of those on the club's roster in 2015 will be Aboriginal.

The Warriors, who will play their home contests in Truro, N.S., are gearing up for their inaugural season in the East Coast Junior Lacrosse League.

Team officials would have preferred to play their home contests in a First Nations community, but there is no First Nations community in the province that currently owns its own arena.

The club's roster will feature players aged 17-21.

Besides the Warriors, the six-team ECJLL also includes four other franchises in Nova Scotia. They are the Dartmouth Bandits, Sackville Wolves, Halifax Northwest Marley Lions and Halifax Southwest Hurricanes.

The league also includes one squad based in New Brunswick, the Moncton Mavericks.

[sports]

Each child should have access to sports



PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Don Patterson at the Mississauga YMCA on March 1 as he starts his eight hour spin in support of YMCA youth programs.

By Sam Laskaris
Windspeaker Contributor

MISSISSAUGA, Ont.

Don Patterson will once again spend a good chunk of his summer pedalling across Canada to promote Aboriginal youth fitness.

The 61-year-old Mississauga commercial realtor cycled across the country, from British Columbia to Newfoundland, in 2012, spreading his message that every child should be able to participate in sports.

Following that ride, Patterson established a non-profit company that created Spirit Runner, a free app for Aboriginal youth that tracks their physical activity.

Patterson, however, will not be taking the same route on his 7,000-kilometre journey this year, which begins on June 21, National Aboriginal Day.

He'll begin his ride in Inuvik in the Northwest Territories. And he'll continue on a southerly (sometimes southeasterly) route until he reaches Point Pelee in Ontario, the southernmost point of mainland Canada.

Patterson is hoping to pedal an average of 250 kilometres most days and complete his journey by July 19.

"I had gone west to east (across

the country)," he said. "I had this idea I could do a ride of north to south."

As a result, Patterson will not visit as many provinces this time around. After beginning his journey in the Northwest Territories, he will head to the Yukon. From there he will enter British Columbia. His ride will also take him through Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba before ending up in Ontario.

"Travelling across the country is just stunning," he said. "But the real part of this is meeting the kids."

Besides doing his share of cycling, Patterson will also be visiting various Aboriginal groups in numerous communities to spread his message of the importance of physical activity.

Patterson is also hoping his ride this year will raise a considerable amount of funds.

"We're looking for \$150,000 to go to the YMCA and the GEN7 program," he said. "I think we'll get some good awareness of it as we go along."

The GEN7 program encourages Aboriginal children to live a healthy and active life through sport and physical activity. And the YMCA, which can provide financial assistance to those who can't afford its programs and services, is committed to building healthy

communities and improving lives.

Patterson is hoping funds raised from his ride will continue to benefit many for a long time.

"I really want to develop something that is sustainable," he said. "I really want to see if we can establish sustainable sports programs."

For example, talks have already been staged with officials who run Canadian Tire's Jumpstart program. A plan would be to equip Aboriginal youth with bikes and helmets.

"So far I've chatted in Alberta and Ontario with 11 First Nations groups and they've said 'sure, how can we get involved with this'," Patterson said.

Patterson has also already received some big-name endorsements for his ride, which can be seen on his ride blog that has been established at spiritride.blog.com.

Former elite Canadian athletes who are supporting his ride include Alex Steida, Beckie Scott and Sharon Firth.

Steida is a former pro cyclist who was the first North American to wear the yellow jersey in the Tour de France. Scott, a cross-country skier, won a gold medal at the 2002 Winter Olympics and a silver medal at the 2006 Olympics. And Firth, also a former cross-country skier, participated in four Olympics.

Others who have endorsed Patterson's ride are high-ranking officials from the YMCA, Motivate Canada and the National Association of Friendship Centres.

Patterson estimates he'll be cycling 10 hours a day during his ride this year.

"I'll be up at four or five every morning pedalling," he said. "It will be a challenge."

Patterson believes some of the most gruelling aspects of his journey will come early on, while he's riding on the Dempster Highway.

"The first 700 kilometres will be on gravel roads," he said.

In order to prepare for his lengthy journey, Patterson spent the winters cycling indoors at the Mississauga YMCA. But with some better weather now he has started to go on long rides outdoors during weekends.

But unlike his cross-country ride in 2012, Patterson will not be alone this time around.

"That was a real challenge because I did it on my own," he said. "This time I will have a support vehicle."

Patterson added during his first cross-country ride he often had to plan his accommodations and meals on the fly. He does not expect this to be such a concern this time around because he will have a support vehicle, possibly driven by his wife.

[health]
**Film of '67 Pan Am Games
 snub launches discussion**

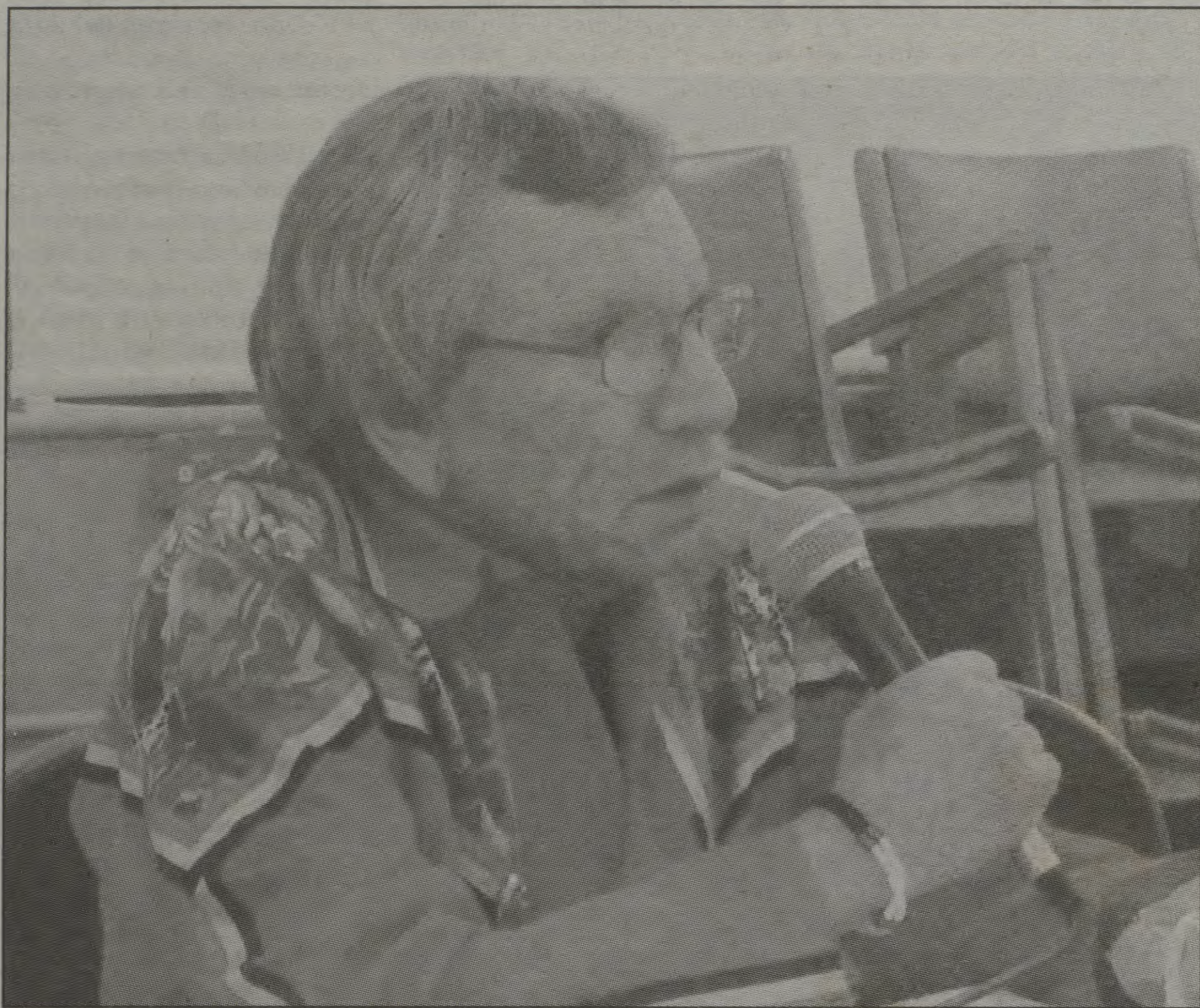


PHOTO: BARB NAHWEGAHBOW

Michael Cheena speaking at Bloor Street United Church in Toronto March 14.

By Barb Nahwegahbow
 Birchbark Writer

TORONTO

In 1967, Canada's centennial year and the year Winnipeg first hosted the Pan American Games, 10 young First Nations men were chosen to run 800 kilometers over an ancient message route with the Games torch.

The young men, nine of whom were students at residential school, started their run in St. Paul, Minnesota and arrived six days later in Winnipeg. When they tried to enter the stadium, they were denied entry and instead, the Games torch was passed to a non-Aboriginal runner to complete the final lap around the stadium.

In 1999, when Winnipeg again hosted the Pan Am Games, the city apologized to the men and during the opening ceremony, seven of the 10 men who were then in their fifties entered the stadium in war canoes. One of them held the Games torch.

The story of these young athletes is told in a 48-minute film titled *Niigaanibatowaad: FrontRunners* made in 2007 and recently screened at Toronto's Bloor Street United Church by their Social Justice Committee.

The organizers felt it was timely to show the film for two reasons. This year marks the end of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and in July, Toronto is hosting the Pan American Games.

The film delves into the abuse suffered by the boys at residential school and how they used

running as a way to rise above it.

A panel discussion following the film, led by two residential school survivors, Murray Crowe and Michael Cheena, focused on the history of residential schools, as well as their own personal experiences.

Murray Crowe said he had experienced the worst of what has been discussed about residential schools. When he left the school, he put it all behind him to the point where he did not reveal he had attended residential school, not even to his wife.

It wasn't until he registered for compensation that he finally told his wife of 22 years. His 18-year-old daughter said she understood why she used to hear him crying in the night when she was growing up.

Michael Cheena, Cree from Moose Factory, was removed from a traditional hunting and trapping lifestyle with his family.

"Before residential school, all I spoke was the Cree language," he said. "When the Indian agent came along and took me to residential school, my life began to change."

Many Canadians don't know about residential schools, Cheena told the audience of about 25 people, and it's especially true for new Canadians.

"The removal of children under the Indian residential school policy was an act of genocide and it falls within the UN Convention of genocide," he said.

"There's a lot of historical tension out there," caused by 150 years of history and misconceptions about

Aboriginal people," Cheena said. "Canada's future depends on a new deal with First Nations," he continued. "And whether settlers realize it or not, they've been implicated as a party to genocide and colonization."

As for his own personal experiences, Cheena said he was traumatized, physically and sexually abused and indoctrinated to become a Christian.

"Every time I walk into a church or see a person wearing a white collar, I get triggered," he said. Cheena was part of a residential school survivors class action lawsuit and after 20 years, received a settlement in January of this year.

While there was no discussion about the Toronto Pan Am Games following the film, it is worth noting that the 2015 Games promise to be very different from the 1967 Games. The 2015 Games will celebrate diversity and inclusivity, and in keeping with that theme, Mississaugas of New Credit will be the Host First Nation and will be welcoming athletes and visitors to their traditional territory.

Metis artist Christi Belcourt has designed the medals for the Games and so far, at least one Games Torchbearer, Cameron Sault, has been chosen.

Twenty-eight-year-old Sault is a former professional hockey player, current youth worker at Six Nations and member of the Mississaugas of New Credit.

And the Frontrunners? They've been invited by the Chair of the Toronto 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Am Games, David Peterson to participate in the opening ceremonies.

Health Watch

Compiled by Shari Narine

Street drug forces state of emergency on Blood reserve

The Blood Tribe in southern Alberta has called a state of emergency in response to at least 10 deaths on the First Nation over the last six months linked to the street drug Oxy 80, or fake Oxycodone. The pill contains fentanyl — a potent opioid-based pain killer that has a high risk of overdose. It's believed organized crime groups are pushing Oxy 80 in the area. As a result, the Blood Tribe Police Service added a new Crime Reduction Unit with two dedicated officers. The BTPS also started an Oxy 80 tip line for citizens wanting to provide information. As a result, a number of charges have been laid since December. Chief Charles Weasel Head and council passed a resolution on March 6 declaring a local state of emergency to draw attention to the situation and bring more services and support to the community. Band council discussed next steps with the Alberta Emergency Management Agency and the First Nations Inuit and Health Branch.

Cease-and-desist orders dropped against spa

The Florida department of health has dropped cease-and-desist orders against Brian Clement, the director of the Florida health spa that treated Makayla Sault and another First Nations girl suffering from leukemia. Florida Health had ordered Clement to stop practising medicine without a licence and fined him for representing himself as a medical doctor. The department now says it does not have enough evidence to pursue legal action. In July 2014, Sault, 11, attended the Hippocrates Health Institute after leaving chemotherapy at McMaster Children's Hospital in Hamilton. In January, she suffered a stroke and died. Her mother Sonya Sault says Makayla begged her to stop chemotherapy, saying she did not want to die in a hospital. Another 11-year-old girl with leukemia left chemotherapy to attend the Hippocrates institute last August. Her identity is protected by a publication ban. McMaster hospital took the local Children's Aid Society — and eventually the family — to court in an attempt to bring the girl back for chemotherapy treatment. The court sided with the family, saying as a First Nation person, the girl has the right to choose her healthcare procedures. Ontario's attorney general has been given until April 2 to file an appeal.

Drinking water advisories could get higher

A new report from the Council of Canadians indicates that as of January there were 169 drinking advisories in First Nations communities. With threats including tar sands expansion, pipelines, mining, fracking, bottled water plants, climate change and agricultural run-off, the report concludes that without government action, more and more drinking water advisories will follow. "The current government is giving the green light to more resource extraction projects that endanger our water. At the same time, it has removed environmental safeguards. This creates a situation where companies can make unconstrained profits, but at the expense of the water we drink," said Maude Barlow, former special advisor to the UN on water issues and chair of the Council of Canadians. In total, there were 1,838 drinking water advisories in effect across Canada, warning people not to drink their water straight from the tap.

High number of Aboriginal youth receive ICY services

According to the business plan drafted by Providence Health Care, 21 per cent of Inner City Youth clients assessed between March 2007 and December 2013 were identified as Aboriginal. That compares to just 2.3 per cent of Vancouver's total population, according to Statistics Canada data for 2011. Of ICY's total client base, 84 per cent were diagnosed with a mental illness. Of that group, 20 per cent had a psychotic disorder, 48 per cent had a mood disorder, and 34 per cent had an anxiety disorder. Twenty-five per cent of those with a mental illness were also found to struggle with a concurrent addiction issue. ICY provides mental health, addiction, and housing services to teens and young adults aged 16 to 24. The business plan is dated July 2014 and was drafted for the B.C. Ministry of Health as a requirement for \$5 million in provincial funding.

Poor housing quality leads to poor health

Dr. James Makokis, an Aboriginal family physician at Saddle Lake Health Care Centre on the Saddle Lake Cree Nation in Alberta, says poor housing "perpetuates health issues." Makokis spoke at a gathering hosted by Homeward Trust Edmonton, examining the key issues surrounding homelessness in the city. The October 2014 Homeless Count conducted by Homeward Trust Edmonton showed that 47 per cent of the city's homeless population is Aboriginal. Said Makokis in an interview with the *Edmonton Journal*, "Unfortunately, the housing that is often provided is not quality housing. It just perpetuates health issues. People end up coming to see me with upper respiratory tract infections, skin infections and other issues that are inherently connected to poor housing."

Elder will be among those honored by Trent

Michael Thrasher will receive an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Trent University for contributions in creating a climate of respect for Indigenous and Traditional knowledge in Canada and internationally.

Thrasher, an Elder of the Turtle Clan, is a nationally recognized teacher of First Nations philosophy, tradition, and knowledge.

"I'd like to accept this honour on behalf of all those who have

come before. The countless numbers of Elders and traditional knowledge holders who have sacrificed so much over so many years to keep this body of knowledge alive, which I now have the privilege of sharing with others. It is a privilege to be considered worthy of receiving such an honour," he said.

As part of the revitalization of Indigenous knowledge, Trent University, which launched Canada's first Native Studies

program in Canada, broke new ground investigating how Indigenous knowledge could be integrated into the university landscape.

Trent invited a number of Elders, including Thrasher, as wascapeos (helper/apprentice), to spend time with students and explore the opportunity.

This effort resulted in the very first Elders Conference, now an annual event at Trent, which Elder Thrasher participates in each year.

Throughout his career, Thrasher has dedicated his life to teaching and sharing Indigenous ways of knowing, meeting with countless numbers of Aboriginal peoples, First Nation communities, organizations, and institutions to foster healing and reconciliation.

He is widely recognized for his ability to utilize traditional Indigenous knowledge to address contemporary issues. He has given lectures and taught courses on the topic and has mentored numerous undergraduate and graduate students across Canada, including a number of doctoral candidates at Trent.

As a valued Elder and colleague with the now called Indigenous Studies program at Trent, Thrasher has been instrumental in bringing the original vision to fruition, integrating traditional knowledge into the university through the development of

initiatives such as the PhD program, another first in Canada.

Thrasher is among five people to receive honorary degrees at Trent during the university's 2015 convocation. The others are Degrassi producer Stephen Stohn, filmmaker Peter Raymont, naturalist Drew Monkman, and child care advocate Martha Friendly.

"Each year, Trent recognizes a group of inspiring individuals with the university's highest honour: an honorary doctorate. This year continues that tradition," said Dr. Leo Groarke, president and vice-chancellor at Trent University.

"At our upcoming ceremonies we pay tribute to five individuals who have made long-lasting contributions to our local, national and global communities in the fields of child care, film, music, the environment and Indigenous studies."

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[education]

Really looking at the person behind the stereotype

The work of Winnipeg artist KC Adams will be displayed around the University of Manitoba's Fort Garry, Bannatyne and William Norrie campuses.

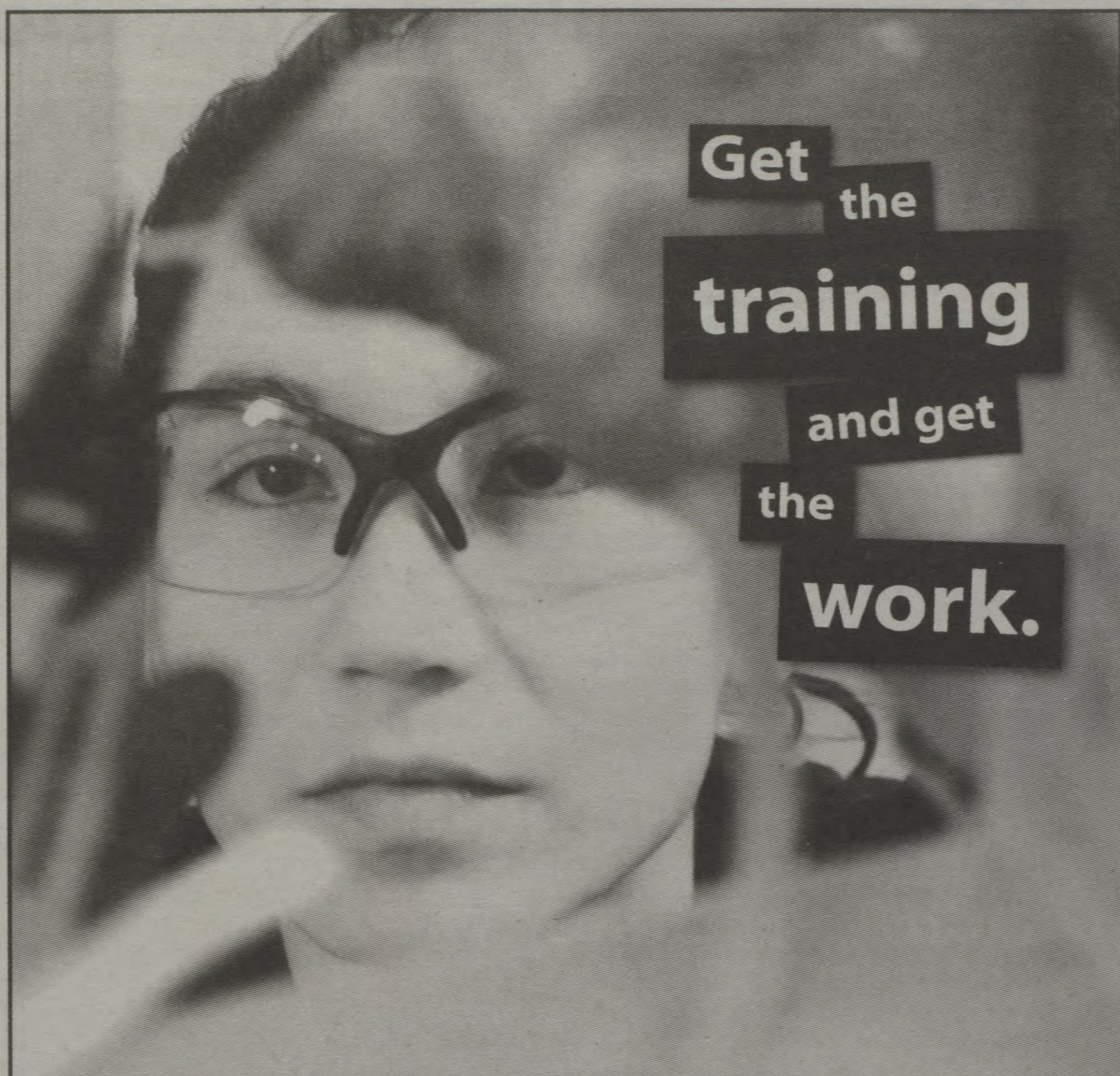
The exhibit, called Perception, will challenge viewers to see a series of portraits through a different lens. The portraits confront the racist stereotypes Indigenous people face. One image of a woman shows her somber face with the insult "GOVERNMENT MOOCHER" running across the top. Next to it, the same woman is shown smiling, with this text: "Kim Wheeler (Ojibway/Mohawk) a mother,

writer, publicist, producer, homeowner, golfer, who paid for her own education."

"I am pleased to be a partner in bringing the Perception project to our U of M campus," said Deborah Young, executive lead for Indigenous Achievement at the University of Manitoba.

"The project uses the power of photographic images to raise awareness about racial stereotypes and hopefully, in doing so, will help dispel negative images of Indigenous peoples."

The images will be displayed on televisions and posters throughout the campuses for the next two weeks.



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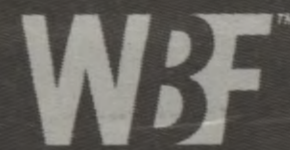
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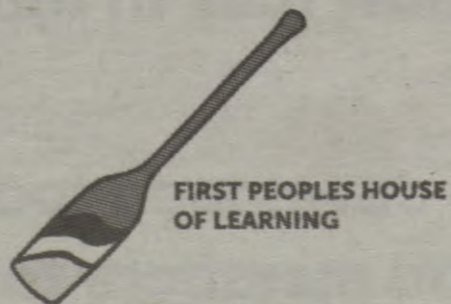
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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

THUNDER BAY/TORONTO SERVICE CENTRES

The mandate of the Ontario First Nations Technical Services Corporation (OFNTSC) is to provide technical and enhanced advisory services to all First Nations in Ontario. The OFNTSC requires the services of an Executive Director for the Thunder Bay and Toronto Service Centres. The successful candidate will report directly to the Board of Directors through the Executive Committee. The successful candidate can work from either Toronto or Thunder Bay.

DUTIES:

- The Executive Director will create and manage an effective relationship with the Board of Directors, First Nations, Political Native Organizations, Federal/Provincial Government Department and Ministries.
- Develop and implement, in consultation with the President, Executive Committee, the Board and Client First Nations, a strategic and operational plan for the Corporation through which it will fulfill its mandate of delivering technical advisory services to Ontario First Nations.
- Implement the organization's mission and strategic direction as conveyed through Board approved policies and concrete objectives.
- Provide direction and management to the Director of Finance, Operation and Technical managers and related staff.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- A Degree in Business Administration or Public Administration at the Bachelors or Masters level; or related discipline and/or an Engineering Degree at the Bachelors or Masters level; or related discipline. An engineering or technical background is an asset.
- A minimum of 7-10 years of related work experience.
- Possess a good understanding of First Nations cultures and traditions as well as the roles and responsibilities of Chief and Council and First Nations political organizations.
- Excellent communication, organization and leadership skills; proven accountability to superiors and ability to lead a senior management team are required.
- Experience in developing and managing budgets.
- Candidates must possess a valid Ontario Driver's License and be willing to travel.

Please mark clearly on the envelope "Executive Director" and mail your resumé/curriculum vitae to one of the following addresses no later than **April 10, 4:30 p.m. (EST)** to the attention of Robert Howsam.

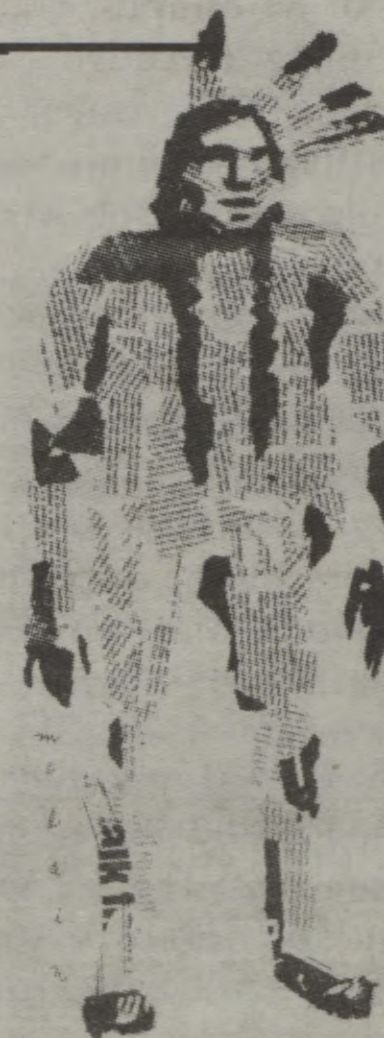
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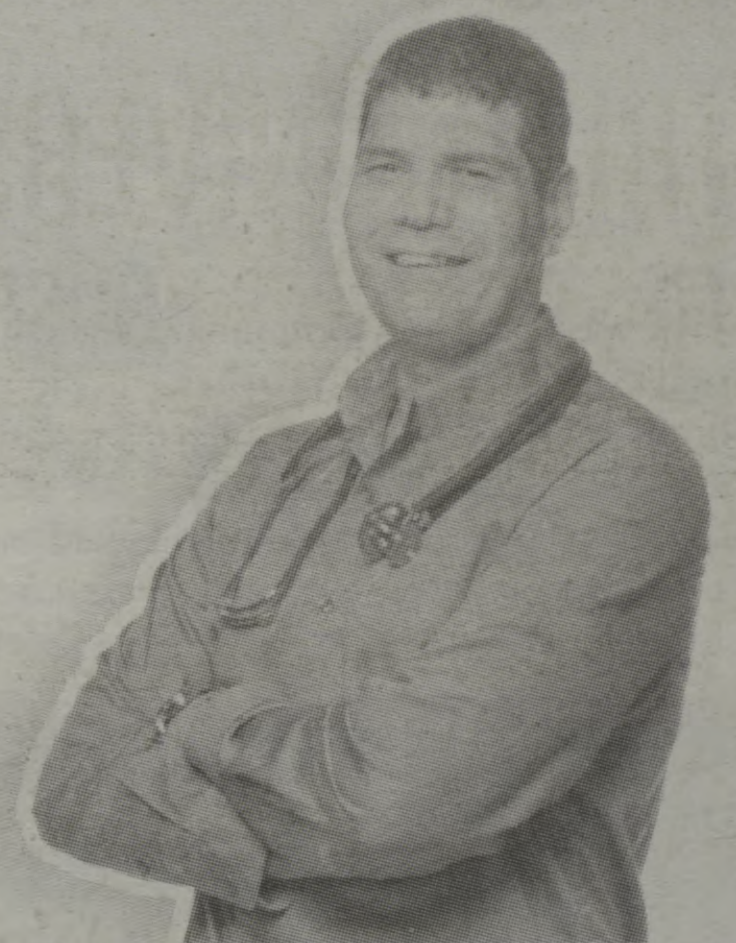
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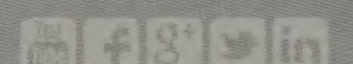
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[footprints] Amber Lightning Raine Suicide one of many to spark United Nations appeal

By Dianne Meili

In the early hours of March 4, Amber Lightning Raine, 20, joined the ever-growing number of young Aboriginal people who have committed suicide.

Her death was not the result of a horrific childhood, nor was she facing insurmountable life challenges or suffering a lack of family and social support.

"Yes, she was struggling with her relationship ... she had a boyfriend on and off, and she had been drinking. It may have been her lifestyle, or recent deaths of other young people in our family," said her father Rick Lightning of the Ermineskin Cree Nation, part of the Maskwacis community in central Alberta formerly known as Hobbema.

"I honestly don't believe she would have done it had she been sober."

Seemingly, she had everything going for her. In training in Edmonton, she was on-track to create the career she'd dreamed of—studying theatrical make-up application with an eye to working in television productions like *Blackstone*.

She was excited about the trip she would take with her family to Las Vegas come June when she turned 21.

"She had her sisters and everyone along the line supporting her," Rick said. "There was no 'cutting' of her arms or any kind of behaviour that said 'help me, help me, I want to kill myself.' But we didn't get any kind of a warning whatsoever and that's why this has totally caught us off guard."

The only challenge Amber might have faced was the fact she was negotiating her way through life in a big city that moved a lot faster than the pace of her home reserve.

"She was living in a communal situation with three other roommates she was close to. I felt good about that," said Rick, who also lost his 27-year-old granddaughter to suicide in February.

"It was just the outside influences. As parents we don't know what's out there. Sexuality is so much more open than when I was her age. You don't know what young people deal with. There are so many factors involved in today's world."

As in so many Aboriginal communities across Canada, suicides like Amber's are a growing concern. A reported 40 people took their lives in Maskwacis in the three-month period between November 2014 and January 2015.

The suicide rate in this country's First Nation communities is five to six times higher than that of the rest of the population, and among Inuit people it is six to 11 times higher.

Last month, the 12-year-old grandson of Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner Wilton Littlechild, also from Ermineskin, took his life.

In April, for the first time, delegates will discuss the issue of suicide at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York. Littlechild will be among them.

Suicide has become a serious problem for Indigenous populations around the globe. Here in Canada, it accounts for more than one-third of all deaths amongst Aboriginal youth.

As a youth worker who may have more tools than other parents faced with offspring who kill themselves—because he teaches about suicide prevention and grief recovery—Rick says he's affected by his daughter's death in ways that alarm him.

"I don't have a temper. But lately I find myself getting really angry, yet it doesn't have anything to do with what's happening around me. I've come to realize why I'm getting so irritated. I'm mad at Amber."

He offers a reason suicide is escalating amongst his people.

"There is so much death in our community. It's imprinted on our psyche. There's so much of it people just automatically say 'I'm



Inez and Rick Lightning, parents of Amber Lightning. To avoid sensationalizing their daughter's death, and risking copycat suicides, they disallowed the publishing of Amber's photo.

going to kill myself' without really meaning to say it. It's on the mind of everyone out here in Maskwacis."

Suicide doesn't seem that serious to people. It's become commonplace, he said.

"And that's not normal."

An Elder from Saskatchewan has suggested to Rick that negative energy may have built up around suicide to the point it's become a spiritual entity that feeds on depression and destructive behaviour. It may push young people who might not normally take their lives to take that drastic step, according to the Elder.

Young people have approached Rick and disclosed they've heard and seen the entity and they've fought against it. It scared them because of its power.

Entity or not, a common

thread among the suicide victims seems to be alcohol misuse, he added.

"I think there's unresolved grief of some kind and that leads to alcohol. It's a common denominator in not all, but in most, suicides."

Rick tells young people to make contracts with each other.

"You can have brother to brother, sister to sister, or friend to friend say to each other 'I need you to be alive for another year and if anything is getting in the way of you living, you have to talk to me about it'."

"People say the contract should be made to last forever, but saying a year gives young people a concrete time they can envision and work with. At the end of the year, you can renew the contract."

And we definitely need to emotionally support each other,

he said. "We don't do that enough for each other."

"We send texts to each other that say 'I love you' and post little messages on Facebook, but it doesn't take the place of taking the time to just go out and camp with each other. We need to take time for each other. We're so modern we don't show up on each other's doorsteps anymore because we don't want to intrude. It's not intruding."

When 12-year-olds like Littlechild's grandson are taking their lives, Rick doesn't think children in grades one and two are too young to hear messages about suicide.

"We have to create a curriculum of some kind and put it in the schools so children understand that suicide is not the answer."

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Specific claims resolution complaints continue

By Shari Narine
Windspeaker Contributor

TORONTO

An expert panel established by the Assembly of First Nations to gather information on the specific claims process is underscoring the findings of a report authored by claims research directors from across Canada.

In Bad Faith: Justice At Last and Canada's Failure to Resolve Specific Claims challenges Canada for "incorrect conclusions and misleading statements" that say the Specific Claims Action Plan: Justice At Last is successful.

Justice At Last has been the Aboriginal Affairs department's official policy for resolving specific claims since 2007. The federal government plans to discontinue program funding in the 2016-2017 fiscal year.

"AANDC rationalizes this decision in light of false statements that Justice At Last has met its objectives," states *In Bad Faith's* authors.

The report refutes all five of the points highlighted by AANDC about the program's success: that fewer specific claims are entering the system; that the backlog of specific claims has been eliminated; that specific claims accepted by the minister are being negotiated; that access to mediation has been successfully established for First Nations; and that the Specific Claims Tribunal is "providing a final, just, and timely mechanism for resolving

claims."

The implementation of Justice At Last is not the legislation the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations was active in creating and supported, said Jayme Benson, specific claims director with the FSIN. He was speaking to an expert panel March 9.

"Today there's a process on paper that looks a lot better, but seems to be, in practise, pretty dysfunctional," Benson said. He noted that Saskatchewan was probably one of the more successful areas in settling claims with more than \$1 billion in specific claim settlements and the transfer of more than one million acres of land to reserve.

But he said "The whole approach of Canada is adversarial. Fight everything tooth and nail at every stage of the process. Instead of trying to resolve claims through the negotiations, push them to the tribunal. It seems they're more willing to lose at the tribunal than they are to make a decision earlier on to negotiate."

Benson was one of about a dozen presenters in the first of two hearings hosted by the AFN's expert panel, which consists of chair Delia Opekokew and Bryan Schwartz and Robert Winogron who are both former legal counsel for the AFN/Canada Joint Task Force that created the *Specific Claims Tribunal Act*.

The panel was struck by the AFN to gather information about the current specific claims process, and get experiences and

insights as well as ideas for change from those who have participated in the process.

"The biggest problems aren't necessarily with the act itself, but in terms of how the act is being implemented and issues within the process itself," said Benson. "It doesn't seem to be so much a problem of what we set up, as the fact that the department has then taken it and interpreted it a certain way."

In Bad Faith outlines areas of concern that deal with the implementation of the policy. First, the report says the number of specific claims entering the system is increasing. This is because of the Specific Claims Branch's internal policy of accepting for negotiation only minor portions of claim submissions and demanding legal releases of liability on the bulk of substantive allegations.

This in turn is forcing First Nations to file separate, smaller claims. The backlog of claims appears to be diminishing only because they have been rejected and now have moved on to the Specific Claims Tribunal.

In practice, AANDC unilaterally and without consultation imposes a preliminary value upon each claim, then the Specific Claims Branch identifies the majority of these claims as "small value" claims and denies First Nations the opportunity to negotiate them.

Kathleen Lickers, barrister and solicitor with Six Nations, agreed with Benson.

"It was drafted on the promise from Canada that negotiation was their preferred path, (but) that's not the Canada that we've seen," Lickers told the panel.

She also called into question the independence of the process noting that the mediation service was administered by government staff within government offices.

"They're the judge, the defendant, the banker and the time keeper, and is that still necessary?" she asked.

In Bad Faith notes that "First Nations have publicly criticized this mediation unit for its appearance of conflict of interest. First Nations' requests for mediation services are routinely denied by Specific Claims Branch officials.

"Further, with the prevalence of 'take-it-or-leave-it' offers, there is much less opportunity for mediation."

Luke Hunter, land, rights, and treaty research director with Nishnawbe Aski Nation, told the panel that the federal agenda was to "choke the next generation with claims" and wind down the process.

He also noted that NAN members have not taken their specific claims to the tribunal, despite having their claims rejected by Canada, because the tribunal is only able to offer financial compensation and cannot make decisions on land.

"If there's no land, how can First Nations be sustainable in the long term?" Hunter asked. "This underscores the need to revamp the way Canada is handling the


specific claims process... The Specific Claims Tribunal is very much in need of a thorough, independent review."

An open letter addressed to Prime Minister Stephen Harper and signed by leaders of First Nations, tribal councils, provincial and territorial organizations, NDP MPs, claims research directors and units, and like-minded organizations, concludes, "Specific claims will not be resolved if Canada continues to engage in the practices detailed in the enclosed report, nor will they disappear without honorable government leadership that respects the principles of justice articulated in its own policy documents. The debt burden on Canadians is mounting and the already fragile relationship between Canada and First Nations is in danger of further deterioration.

"With an upcoming federal election, we urge you to implement the recommendations outlined in our report and uphold the promises made in Justice At Last to settle specific claims through fair, honorable and timely negotiations with First Nations, and ensure that the human rights of First Nations are fully respected."

AFN's expert panel is scheduled to hold a second hearing in Vancouver on March 26 (after deadline). Information gathered from the two hearings will be used to make an independent recommendation on improving the specific claims process policy and legislation, said Opekokew.

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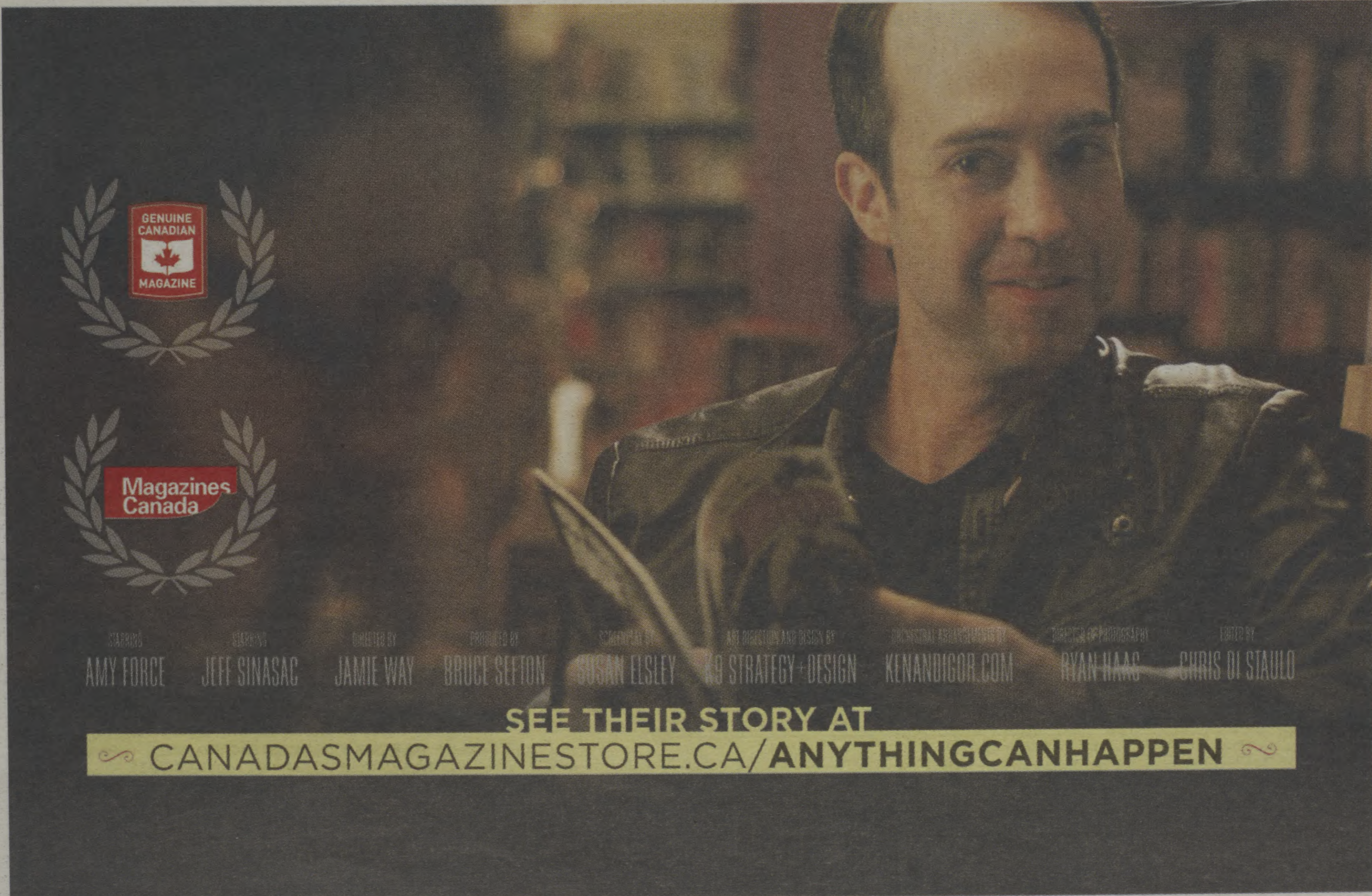
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