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Wind speaker



Canada's National Aboriginal News Source

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Protecting the Sacred

That was the mantra echoed by guest speakers and those who attended the week long International Indigenous Leadership Gathering 2011 near Lillooet, B.C. This young Aztec dancer from Mexico was participating at the event.

For complete story turn to page 11.

Photo Credit: Doug Poyer

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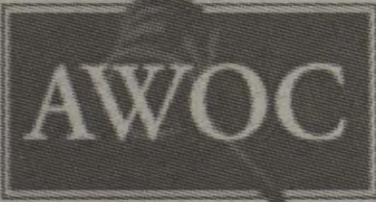
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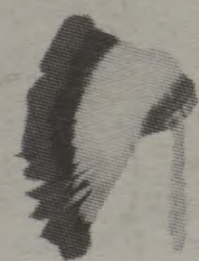
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Inuit in crisis: Canada failing northern peoples

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A unique partnership between the University of Alberta and the Métis Nation of Alberta will benefit Métis across the country. "While (the research centre) is focused in Alberta, our history knows no boundaries so it's obvious any research that's done will be of the Métis nation itself," said Clem Chartier, president of the Métis National Council.

Grandmother walks to protect water

9

It's Nibi in Ojibway, Nipiy in Cree, Samqwan in Mi'kmaq, and other nations have their own word for it. We all know it by the English word, water. We also know how important it is to life. We've heard about how pollution has caused changes to fish, and we can't eat as much of the staple as we used to because of it.

First Nations leaders remain annoyed with name change

10

The federal government's quiet move to change the name of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Canada certainly didn't go without notice.

Gathering attracts participants from around the world

11

The message was as clear and consistent as the ongoing traditional beating of the drums. The guest speakers, the ceremonies, and all who attended the week long International Indigenous Leadership Gathering 2011 near Lillooet, B.C. echoed the mantra of "Protecting the Sacred."

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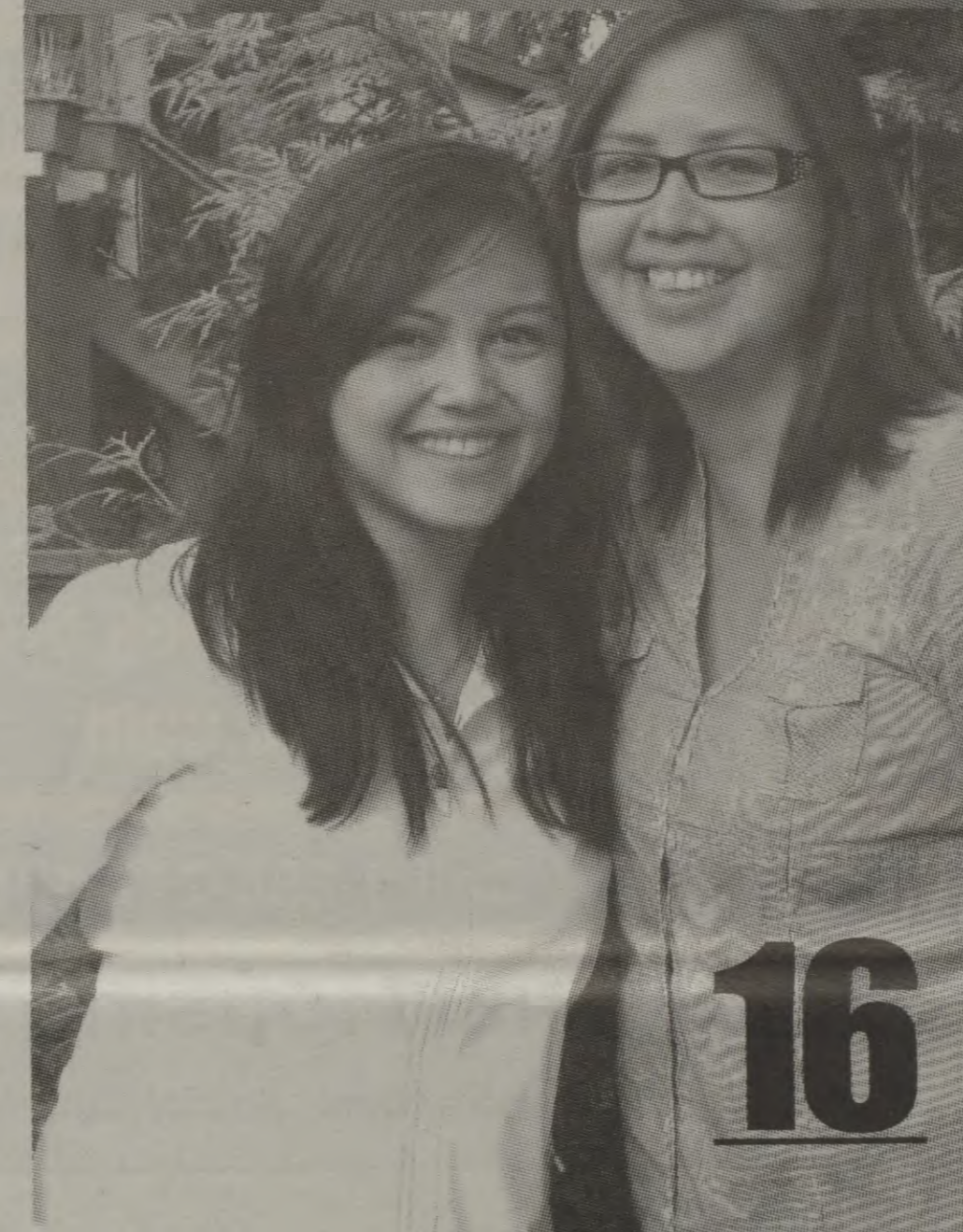
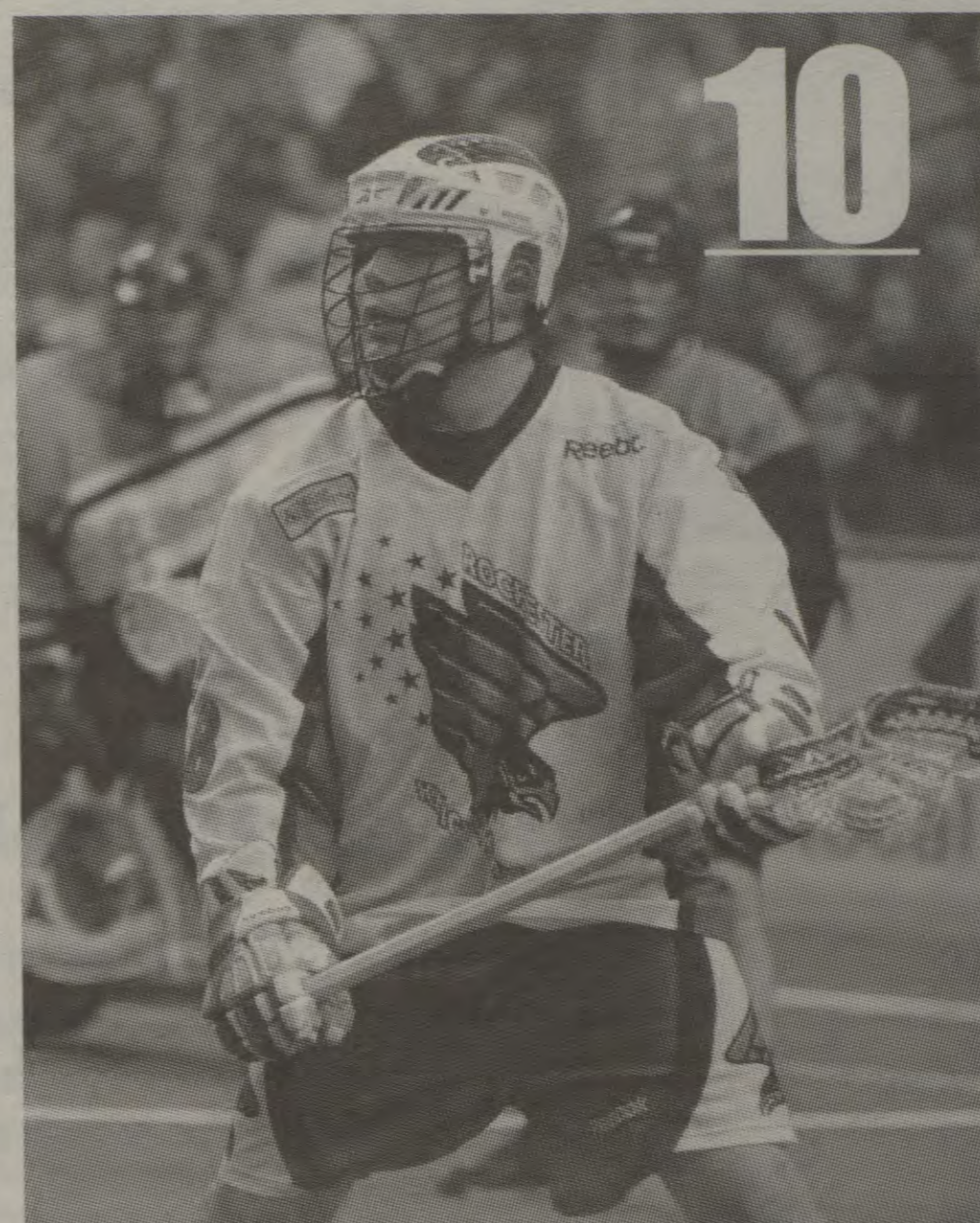
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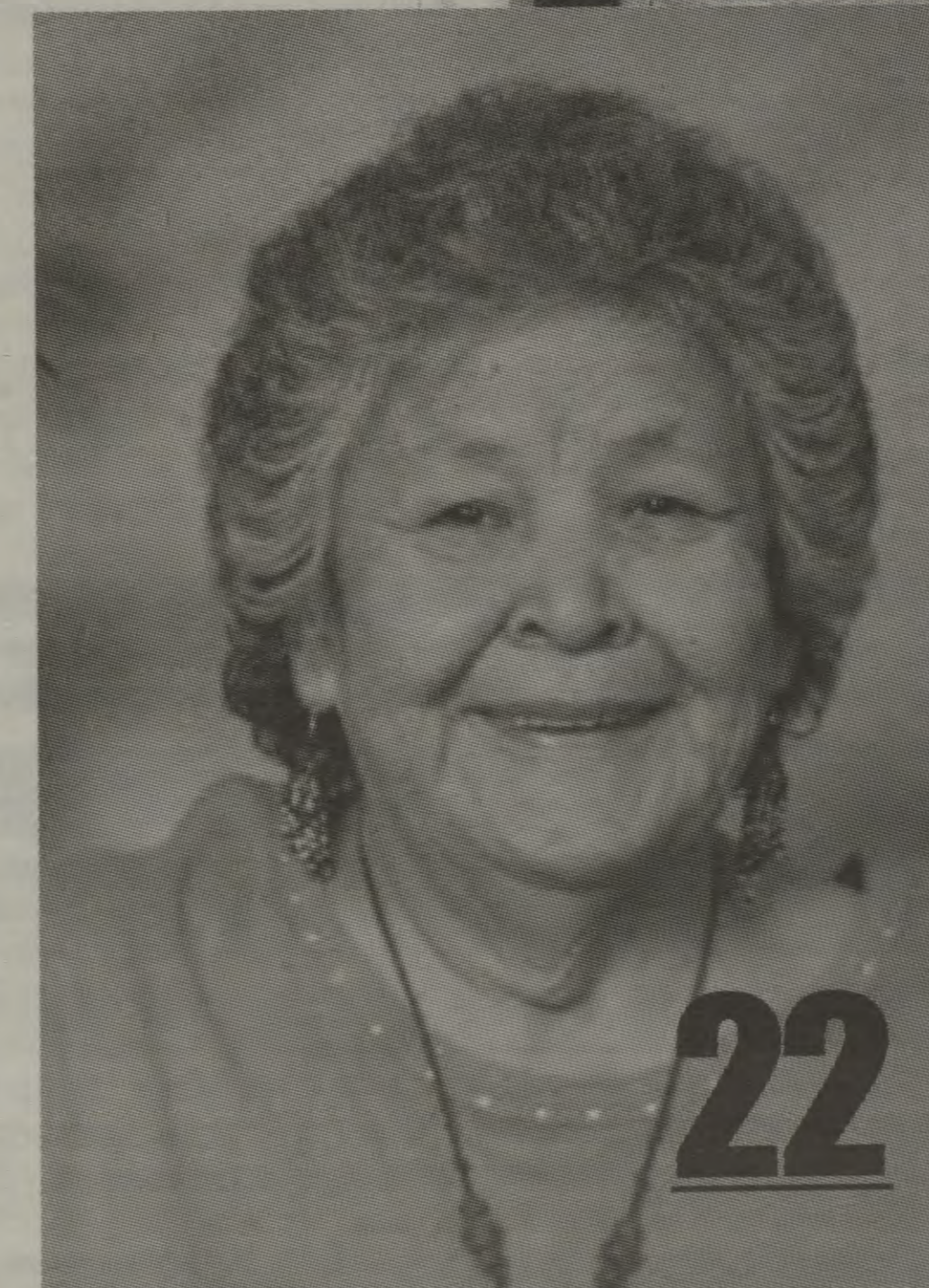
Before her death on Jan. 4, 2011, Lillian Pitawanakwat, Thunderbird Eagle Woman (Ninkii BinessMijissi Kwe) of the Thunderbird clan, wrote out comforting words for those left behind.

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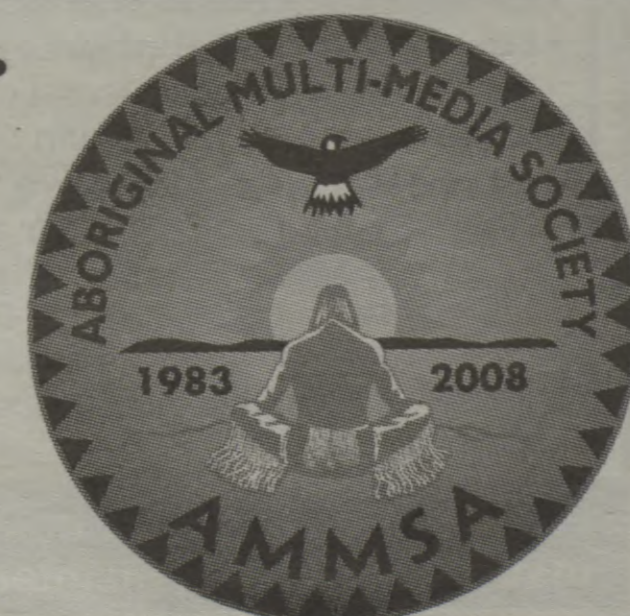


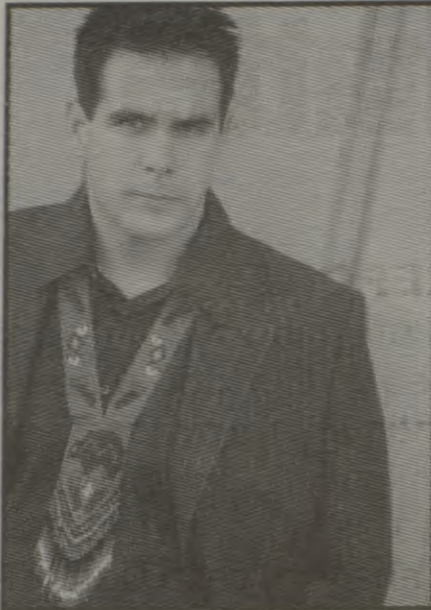
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Les 28 et 29 septembre 2011
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Lors de cette conférence des représentants des communautés autochtones, des administrateurs gouvernementaux et des juristes sauront répondre aux interrogations que soulèvent les plus récents développements quant à la gestion des ressources naturelles et la gestion du territoire en milieu autochtone.

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- Les droits des peuples autochtones et la justification économique
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A reminder of our responsibility

We have a couple of stories in this newspaper this month that take a look at the news from a more spiritual angle than you might normally get. We like to touch back to this perspective when we can to ground us, or remind us, that there is more to this worldly endeavor than just politics and land claims, conflict and struggle. It lifts us up, renews us, and humbles us.

That is why we are pleased to share with readers, if you haven't already heard, that a white buffalo calf was born in May on a ranch in Texas. On May 12, a thunderstorm blew through Hunt County near Greenville and a miracle occurred, or, at least, the longest of long shots. Rancher Arby Little Soldier welcomed a rare creature to the land, which, according to the National Bison Association, occurs one out of every 10 million births.

Little Soldier and his wife spotted the calf while they were out riding one day. Its brother, a black calf, had been born earlier, and while the mother was preparing to birth again the couple hoped to watch, but when the herd became agitated and surrounded the couple they retreated a distance, and later caught a glimpse of the special offspring.

According to a report from Ernestine Chasing Hawk, Little Soldier saw something near his pond running alongside one of the cows. At first he thought it was a coyote or a white dog, he told the reporter, but when he looked through his binoculars he could see the white face with black eyes, a black nose and a black tipped tail.

Now for those unfamiliar with the prophecy around the birth of a white buffalo, let us recount to you the tale of White Buffalo Calf Woman. She gifted the Lakota centuries ago with a sacred bundle and a red clay peace pipe. She appeared at a distance to two warriors out hunting in the Black Hills in what is now called South Dakota. At first she was just a large shape coming toward them, but as she came near she turned into a beautiful young Indian girl.

One of the men had evil in his mind and heart and, recognizing this, White Buffalo Calf Woman asked him to step forward. When he did, a black cloud appeared over him and destroyed him leaving only a skeleton. The other warrior fell to his knees to pray. White Buffalo Calf Woman sent him back to his community with a message. She would travel to his village to give them the sacred bundle she was holding and he was to prepare the people.

The next day she came toward the village singing. She laid the bundle down on the ground, and opened the buffalo robe, revealing

a pipe stem and bowl. She assembled the pipe, sang to the four directions, and explained how to use it, and she gifted them with seven sacred ceremonies—a purification ceremony (sweatlodge), a naming ceremony, a healing ceremony, an adoption ceremony, a marriage ceremony, the vision quest, and the sundance.

Before she left the community she made some prophecies, and one of them was that when a white buffalo calf stood upon the earth she would return to them to purify the world bringing back harmony, balance and spirituality. She left toward the west and as she traveled the people could see her transform first into a young black buffalo, a red one, a yellow one and finally, as she went out of sight over the hill, a white buffalo calf.

Chief Arvol Looking Horse is the 19th generation Keeper of the Sacred White Buffalo Calf Pipe bundle. He was 12 years old when he received it. He says that almost every year since 1994 a white buffalo "has stood upon the earth" and while White Buffalo Calf Woman said that this would be a blessing, Looking Horse says it is also a warning.

"When the white animal shows his sacred color there will be some great changes," said Looking Horse. He believes that we are in that time of great change with global warming, and changes to the earth.

It's hard not to believe that the tsunamis of the past few years that have wreaked havoc around the world, the terrible earthquakes, the fires, and the floods, aren't just poor Mother Earth trying to tell us that something is terribly wrong. It's like we have forgotten how to live and care for her.

Looking Horse says that in order for this earth to survive, it will take a global effort of like-minded people with good hearts and minds to come together and help each other to create that peace and harmony and balance that the world so desperately needs.

Looking Horse says that in the circle of humanity there is no one person higher than another. All have the gift of compassion, and the gift of responsibility. And there is no place to hide from that responsibility. There is no place on the earth that is not being affected by this great change.

Even though the birth of a white buffalo calf is an auspicious occasion, we have to understand that it is no magic pill that will relieve us of our responsibility to Mother Earth, and there is no one person who will alone be able to relieve her of her pain.

"He was born to all nations and not just to me," said Little Soldier of the white calf.

Truer words have never been said.

Windspeaker

Letter: In support of respectful debate

Dear Editor:

re: Taiaiake Alfred/Caroon response

On one hand, [Taiaiake Alfred] states "advancing Native issues requires being honest, and showing respect even in debate with those people you disagree with" yet his earlier comment calls *Windspeaker* a "poseur" Native newspaper. That doesn't sound too respectful to me.

I love *Windspeaker* and have been reading it faithfully for years. Is it perfect, no, however it's one of the best sources of information out there, and it helps me learn more about the issues.

Good work you guys. Thumbs down Taiaiake. Quit stooping low.

Jay Janvier

APTN NATIONAL NEWS REPORTS

Big Brother is watching, and is monitoring not only First Nations protests, but has developed a "Hotspot" reporting system designed to provide "continuous environmental monitoring" and "information dissemination" or existing and emerging risks." The department has also developed a "Hotspot" binder to summarize and analyze "case files." The documents that detail the reporting system were obtained under Canada's Access to Information Act by Russell Diabo and Shiri Pasternak. They found that there was a concerted effort to gather information about what the government termed "hot spots" in the Aboriginal community. Highlighted communities include Tobique First Nation, Tsartlip First Nation, the Algonquins of Barriere Lake, Teztan Biny (Fish Lake) First Nation, Six Nations, Grassy Narrows, Stz'uminous First Nation, the Likhts'amsiyu Clan of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation, Gitxaala First Nation, Wagmatcook First Nation, Innu of Labrador, Pikangikum First Nation and "bands from the coast of Vancouver Island to the shores of the Atlantic Ocean," the authors wrote on the Dominion News Cooperative Web site. They say Indian Affairs plays a pivotal role in relaying information, including to several other government departments, police and intelligence agencies. Indian Affairs rates First Nations protests into two distinct areas, those organized by band councils and those by "splinter groups," which are "harder to manage" the department determined, and are "unpredictable." The documents were drafted in preparation for the June 29, 2007, National Day of Action, "which eventually lead to the shutdown of one of Canada's busiest highways, the 401 in Ontario, for several hours," writes APTN. "What we see in these documents—from the hot spot reports themselves, to the intelligence-sharing between government and security forces—is a closely monitored population of First Nations, who clearly are causing a panic at the highest levels of Canadian bureaucracy and political office," Diabo and Pasternak write.

THE YALE FIRST NATION TREATY WAS

ratified in the provincial legislature on June 2. That's the good news. The bad news is Sto:lo leaders who oppose the treaty say the deal is far from done. Sto:lo Tribal Council (STC) and the Sto:lo Nation (SN) have expressed their opposition to the treaty approved by the 66 members of the Yale Band.† The conflict, reports the Chilliwack Times, is over the Five Mile Fishery, a stretch along the Fraser Canyon from Yale to Sawmill Creek which has been claimed by the Yale in their treaty. Sto:lo families have fished there for centuries and have been in conflict with the Yale fishers over many years. Under the treaty, Yale will have the authority to approve who fishes in the canyon. Sto:lo Tribal Council Grand Chief Clarence Pennier said Yale Chief Robert Hope will not negotiate so they are taking their fight to those public institutions that support the treaty. "Our beef is with the government because they haven't recognized the title and rights of the Sto:lo," he said. "They are just hiding behind this treaty." Chief Hope claims that Yale is a distinct First Nations from the Sto:lo, but Pennier insists it's all Sto:lo territory. "Yale isn't a separate nation. They never have been. They are Sto:lo and have been and will continue to be." Pennier wants guaranteed access for Sto:lo fishing families in the area, and if governments don't listen the issue will proceed to the courts.

TREATY 3 GRAND CHIEF DIANE KELLY

expressed "shock and frustration," reports the Montreal Gazette, at an award given to a Kenora Police officer who was involved in the shooting of a First Nations woman. Helen Proulx, 39, was shot by the officer after responding to a domestic call. Witnesses said the officer tried to convince the woman to give up the knife, but she advanced toward the officer. Proulx suffered injuries to her arm and pelvis, but later recovered. Ontario Provincial Police Commissioner Chris Lewis gave a citation for bravery to the officer for her handling of the situation. Ontario's Special Investigations Unit cleared the officer of wrongdoing, saying she was justified in her use of force. But Kelly said in a press release "Efforts to improve the lives of Anishinaabe people in the Kenora area and build positive relations with the OPP are impeded by these types of announcements." OPP Insp. Dave Ross said the officer received the award for her "overall actions" during the incident, writes the Gazette. "This particular officer received (the) commissioner's citation for bravery for her actions, so that's not necessarily in relation to discharge of a firearm," he said. "That's in relation to her overall actions in protecting the life of bystanders and of herself in a volatile situation."

Do you have a rant or a rave?

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The Aboriginal Multi-Media Society (AMMSA) is incorporated and begins publishing the AMMSA newspaper to serve Alberta's Aboriginal people.

1985

The AMMSA newspaper is renamed Windspeaker.

1987

Windspeaker expands coverage to western Canada.

1990

AMMSA and Windspeaker develop a 5-year plan to become self-sufficient.

1991

AMMSA and Windspeaker (along with 10 other Aboriginal publishers) lose all government funding to support training of Aboriginal people in publishing careers.

1993

Windspeaker celebrates its 10th anniversary and self-sufficiency by expanding distribution and coverage to include all of Canada.

1996

AMMSA and Windspeaker launch the web site: www.ammsa.com

2003

AMMSA and Windspeaker celebrate 20 years by expanding operations and moving into a new and larger location.

2010

AMMSA and Windspeaker celebrate 27 years with a re-launch of the web site.

2011

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Centre will help guide policy development

By Shari Narine
Windspeaker Contributor

EDMONTON

A unique partnership between the University of Alberta and the Métis Nation of Alberta will benefit Métis across the country.

"While (the research centre) is focused in Alberta, our history knows no boundaries so it's obvious any research that's done will be of the Métis nation itself," said Clem Chartier, president of the Métis National Council.

Chartier was in Edmonton on May 31 when the MNA and university announced the creation of the Rupertsland Centre for Métis Research.

"This is the first academic research centre focused on Métis research in Canada," said Dru Marshall, outgoing deputy provost with the U of A.

The centre is the culmination of a decade of work undertaken between the MNA and the university and the result of a memorandum of understanding that both parties signed in 2007.

It is also the result of a relationship that was formed between Chartier and the new research centre's research director professor Frank Tough, associate dean of research in the Faculty of Native Studies at the U of A. Chartier received a \$5,000 research grant in 1993 and partnered with Tough, then teaching at the University of Saskatchewan. Five years later, Chartier received a \$300,000 grant from the Saskatchewan and federal governments to do research on a Métis land claim in

northwestern Saskatchewan. By that time Tough had moved on to the University of Alberta and Chartier engaged him and his research staff in the work.

Tough has also been involved in the Métis Archival Project Lab, which has resulted in an extensive database that will complement the work undertaken by the Rupertsland Centre for Métis Research.

Chartier sees the centre serving as a base to contain research from across the country.

"This research has to be housed somewhere. It has to have a lasting life," said Chartier.

But perhaps the greatest benefit Chartier sees coming from the new Rupertsland Centre for Métis Research is the voice it will give in educating both academia and the general public as to who the Métis people are.

"What's important is that it's not the Métis people themselves that will be making this articulation. It will be a joint articulation by an academic institute, like a university. So other professors, other universities will take it more meaningfully, will give it more credence because it's their own institutions that are doing that. So in that sense it's very helpful. So I see this as being a big boost," said Chartier.

He also sees this definition of Métis helping the associations with the registries that are being created in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario. In 2002 the MNC adopted a definition of Métis that was also adopted by the provincial associations and is



PHOTO: SHARI NARINE

Adam Letourneau, chair of the Rupertsland Institute, and Dru Marshall, deputy provost with the University of Alberta, announce the creation of the first academic research centre focused on Métis research in Canada.

now being used to register citizens.

"We're doing registries but there are still tensions across the country about how far does the Métis nation expand... We know there are people with mixed ancestry in the rest of Canada that say they are Métis, and that may be so if you use the dictionary definition for that kind of criteria for being mixed ancestry only, but we're more than that," said Chartier.

On a local front, MNA President Audrey Poitras said the research carried out by the centre will allow her provincial council to provide educated, well-supported direction to provincial policy.

"We have the unique opportunity to develop a policy think tank that will assist in an appropriate and timely response to the questions and issues impacting the Métis in this province," said Poitras.

"It is our great hope that this new centre for Métis research will thrive and become a model for other such centres across the province and country," said Adam Letourneau, chair of the Rupertsland Institute.

The Rupertsland Centre for Métis Research is an arm of the Rupertsland Institute, which is an affiliate of the MNA and delivers labour market programming to the Aboriginal population in Alberta.

Inuit in crisis: Canada failing northern peoples

By Jennifer Ashawasegai
Windspeaker Contributor

OTTAWA

Inuit in Canada have a shorter life expectancy than other people in Canada. That from a report entitled 'Life is Short' from the Conference Board of Canada's Centre for the North.

The report indicates the average Inuit life expectancy is 66.7 years. The national average life expectancy is 81 years. Inuit life expectancy is also lower than the life expectancy of First Nations men and women.

According to a 2005 Health Canada study, the life expectancy for a First Nations man is 68.9 years, while a First Nations woman has a life expectancy average of 76.6 years.

Udloriak Hanson, spokesperson for Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), attributes the lower life expectancy to a number of factors. She says the report

takes into consideration several things including, "a high suicide rate, unhealthy conditions like over-crowded houses, as well as a fairly high accident rate."

ITK President Mary Simon said in a statement that the gap in life expectancy is nothing new.

"I have been underlining this very unfortunate statistic in many of my public speeches over the past five years. It is a sad fact that the life expectancy between Inuit and the average Canadian is 13 years, and that gap is not closing."

Although the gap is wide and has been for many years, Hanson said there are things that can be done to minimize or close the gap. First and foremost, the most obvious action that can be taken is to have more houses.

"Over-crowded housing is a real epidemic in our communities," she said.

The other epidemic, she says, are suicide rates.

"We have 11 times the national average and, typically, our youth

are taking their lives. And if this weren't the case, our life expectancy would definitely increase."

She says information about health and safety needs to get out in communities more to reduce the accident rate. Hanson says although there are many Health Canada programs, they could be improved through more prevention and awareness campaigns.

Diet is another factor.

"There needs to be healthy eating promotion along with good food preparation and the promotion of country food. Country food is most healthy for Inuit."

But, she says, hunting can get costly, and hunters used to be subsidized. That's not the case any longer with a new program called Nutrition North. The Nutrition North program provides subsidies to retailers so they can provide food at a lower cost.

To really address the suicide

rates in Inuit communities, more mental health services need to be provided to communities.

"We've been asking for quite some time for a national Inuit suicide prevention strategy. There are regional suicide prevention strategies, but there needs to be a concerted effort across Inuit regions on a national strategy."

Hanson also says, "We don't have mental wellness centres or services at the community level and we need these services in place for youth and others to lead a healthy life."

Just over two weeks after the release of the life expectancy report, ITK put out a call for an immediate response to an Arctic mental health crises. A statement from Mary Simon urgently pleaded for an investment into community mental health services. That call followed the suicides of two teenage girls in Northern Quebec, the deaths of four family members in one home in Iqaluit and a one-man stand-

off with police in Nunatsiavut. The incidents all happened within the past several months.

Federal Health Minister Leonna Aglukkak announced \$27 million to go towards mental health projects in rural and urban Aboriginal communities, but, on top of that, Simon has requested a one-time \$15 million investment over five years for Inuit mental health programs in the country's four Inuit regions.

In her plea, Simon said, "... Nunavut, Nunavik and Nunatsiavut are in a social crisis. We must respond with extraordinary measures — measures commensurate with the magnitude of the issue. Our people are dying. We need help and we need it now."

The Conference Board of Canada report also stated, "If Nunavik were a country, it would place 133rd in world rankings for life expectancy—behind such countries as Uzbekistan, Tonga, and Iraq."

In honour of Aboriginal History Month all of Windspeaker's online archives will be free to access for the month of June. Check it out at windspeaker.com

Grandmother walks to protect water

By Jennifer Ashawasegai
Windspeaker Contributor

NIPISSING FIRST NATION, Ont.

It's Nibi in Ojibway, Nipiy in Cree, Samqwan in Mi'kmaq, and other nations have their own word for it. We all know it by the English word, water.

We also know how important it is to life. We've heard about how pollution has caused changes to fish, and we can't eat as much of the staple as we used to because of it.

Some First Nations member can't even drink their water. As of April 30, Health Canada reported that 122 First Nations in the country were under various types of water advisories.

First Nations communities in northern Manitoba are without running water. Four First Nations in the Island Lake region were the subject of an investigative series by the Winnipeg Free Press earlier this year to shed light on their water woes.

The United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution last year declaring the human right to "safe and clean drinking water and sanitation." More than 100 countries voted in favour, while 41 countries, including Canada, abstained.

Water is something we can't live without. And one Anishinabe grandmother has been doing something for water.

Grandmother Josephine Mandamin and her sister Melvina Flamand initiated the Mother Earth Water Walk to pray for water's health and promote awareness that water needs protection.

This year marks the eighth walk for the pair. They, along with a group of Anishinabe women, plus other supporters, walked around Lake Superior in Spring 2003, around Lake Michigan in 2004, Lake Huron in 2005, Lake Ontario in 2006, Lake Erie in 2007, Lake Michigan again in 2008 then around the St. Lawrence River in 2009.

This year, the walk, which began in early April, was much larger. Water that they carry with them on the walk was collected from the four directions. At an overnight rest stop in North Bay on May 27, Grandmother Mandamin said water was collected from the Pacific Ocean, the Atlantic Ocean, Lake Superior and the Gulf of Mexico.

Grandmother Mandamin said that after the fresh water walks "We realized the healing potential of salt water. Salt is healing, and that's the idea of bringing that salt water to Lake Superior, as well as all the Great Lakes; the salt water will be intermingled with that."

But, the water collected from the Gulf of Mexico wasn't particularly healthy. The largest oil spill the world has ever seen



PHOTO: JENNIFER ASHAWASEGAI

Grandmother Josephine Mandamin (left) is welcomed to Nipissing First Nation by Chief Marianna Couchie. The community held a feast in honour of nine Eastern Water Walkers.

occurred there last year. A sea floor oil gusher exploded on April 20, 2010, which killed 11 men and injured 17 others.

Over a three month period, it spilled a reported 172 million gallons of oil into the ocean. That's enough to fill nearly 300 Olympic sized swimming pools. Right now, just over a year later, reports indicate oil continues to wash ashore, and the spill is being indirectly blamed for the deaths of more than 150 bottlenose dolphins this year.

When they collected the water from the Gulf of Mexico, and held a send-off ceremony for it, Grandmother Mandamin says, "The Gulf water has been almost depleted of its energy from the oil spill pollution. Not only that, but the ground underneath the water has also been polluted."

"When you look at that water, it's almost like it's embarrassed by what it looks like. And you feel really bad for it, that it's been so depleted of its original energy by the pollution," she said.

The water from the oceans was mixed into Lake Superior with a Midewahnikwe water ceremony on June 12 near Bad River, Wisconsin.

For Grandmother Mandamin, awareness about water is more than just environmental. It's also spiritual and cultural.

"Everything that we do is spiritual... and it's [the walk] about the water that we carry that is very special. So, we have to keep the water in mind first when we walk."

Mandamin advises that bodies of water must be given their original Indigenous names back. The original names are embedded with instructions for water, and how it's supposed to work she says.

Grandmother Mandamin gave a short talk after a community

feast in Nipissing First Nation. She said while she was walking throughout North America, Mandamin said she was 'collecting consciousness.'

Mandamin says, "Collecting consciousness is not easy to explain. But when we are walking with the water, we are also collecting thoughts with that water. And in the collecting of thoughts, we are also collecting consciousness of people's minds. The minds, hopefully, will be of one, sometime."

She paints a bleak picture of an eventual dry landscape if people don't begin to work together on the protection of water.

Through her walks of awareness, Grandmother Mandamin is trying to get the attention of leadership and corporations.

"The main thing that I'm trying to raise consciousness for, is that the people that are destroying everything, and the powers that be, like the presidents and the prime ministers, really need to step forward and really protect the water just like endangered animal species."

To really understand the importance of water, Grandmother Mandamin recommends people learn to have a deep appreciation of it by fasting to know what it's like to be without water, and to use it in a good way.

Mandamin says using water in a good way means thinking consciously about how water is being used. She says people need to question how they are using it and whether they are working at conserving water.

But, Grandmother Mandamin says it's not her place to tell people how to protect the water, and instead, she poses a question, "What are you going to do about it?"

Windspeaker news briefs

A DRUG BUST INVOLVING THE MOHAWK

territories of Akwesasne and Kanatasake near Montreal took place June 14 with 500 officers from a variety of police departments, including the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Surete du Quebec, the First Nations Police of Quebec and the Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service, working together in the operation to take down a major crime organization. It resulted in the arrest of about 40 people. The operation was called "Project CONNECTIVITY" and was executed by the Investigators of the Aboriginal Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit (A-CFSEU). Officers seized some drugs, firearms, cash and a hydroponic greenhouse. Illegal substances included marijuana, cocaine and designer drugs. Police identified Tyron Canatonquin, a resident of Kanatasake, as the leader of the organization. The investigation began in January 2010 to address the concerns of the Aboriginal community who said the criminal organization used violence and intimidation against local residents.

GLEN BANNON, 57, THE FOUNDING CHIEF

of a First Nations police force, is doing jail time in connection with a kickback scheme where he received recreational vehicles and a pick-up truck for sending police business to a car dealer in Sault Ste. Marie. He was sentenced to one year in jail for breach of trust and accepting secret commissions. Bannon was chief of the Anishinabek Police Service for 10 years from 1994 and it was his responsibility to buy and sell police vehicles. During his time as chief, 176 vehicles were leased from Highland Ford with \$4 million going to the dealership. Bannon also bought and sold vehicles used by the OPP's First Nations Police Services Program with another \$2.3 million in business going to Highland Ford.

THE FORMER VICE-PRESIDENT OF

administration and finance of the First Nations University of Canada pleaded guilty to defrauding the federal government in a Regina court June 9. Wesley Robert Stevenson, 60, received a 12-month non-jail sentence and 75 hours of community service. Stevenson admitted that \$15,000 that was to be used for a FNUC cultural exchange to Scotland's Orkney Islands was instead used to pay for things other than the trip, and he paid himself more than \$7,000 in "coordinator's fees" for attending. Stevenson was suspended by the university in 2005 for alleged financial misappropriation. He was then fired, which he contested with an unsuccessful wrongful dismissal suit.

ANOTHER CASE OF FINANCIAL IRREGULARITIES

at First Nations University of Canada continues to wind its way through court. Blue Pelletier, the former president of the student council, is accused of defrauding the student council bank account, which saw a hefty donation of some \$30,000 from the Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority in 2006 dwindle to nothing. Pelletier was to graduate the university with a business administration certificate at the time of the alleged fraud. Pelletier denies directing any of the council's funds to himself. Pelletier was charged in 2009 after the city police commercial crimes unit completed an investigation into a complaint laid by the student association's former secretary and treasurer in the summer of 2007. According to bank records filed as evidence at his trial, cheques worth more than \$25,000, most of them made out to Pelletier, were written on the student group's bank account within the first eight weeks after Pelletier deposited the SIGA money. His trial continues June 27.

OUTGOING AUDITOR GENERAL SHEILA FRASER

released her final report June 9 as she relinquished her post. One chapter was devoted to First Nations issues and highlights the continuing appalling conditions on First Nation reserves, as well as the federal government's failure to address those conditions. "It is clear that living conditions are poorer on First Nations reserves than elsewhere in Canada. Analysis by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) supports this view. In 2010, INAC reported that the index showed little or no progress in the well-being of First Nations communities between 2001 and 2006. Instead, the average well-being of those communities continued to rank significantly below that of other Canadian communities. Conditions on too many reserves are poor and have not improved significantly. In our audits, we have made numerous recommendations concerning federal programs and services for First Nations reserves. In our 2006 May Report, Chapter 5, Management of Programs for First Nations, we found that progress was generally unsatisfactory in implementing the recommendations that are most important to the lives and well-being of First Nations people."

ON THAT SAME DAY AS THE AUDITOR GENERAL'S

report was released, John Duncan, the minister of the new Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development department, and the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Shawn Atleo, announced a Canada-First Nation Joint Action Plan to improve the lives of First Nation people across Canada. The Action Plan identifies four shared priority areas for action—education; accountability, transparency, capacity and good governance; economic development; and negotiation and implementation.

First Nations leaders remain annoyed with name change

By Jennifer Ashawasegai
Windspeaker Contributor

OTTAWA

The federal government's quiet move to change the name of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Canada certainly didn't go without notice. When Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced his new majority government Cabinet, John Duncan, Member of Parliament for Vancouver Island North, maintained the post he held pre-election, but with the swapped out word with Aboriginal replacing the word Indian.

There was an immediate backlash with First Nation leadership demanding to know what the change meant. Others wondered if the change meant an erosion of rights, while the National Métis Council and the Congress of Aboriginal People welcomed the name change and applauded the government for its more inclusive language.

Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Chief Patrick Madahbee was quite vocal with his criticism of the name change. He said, "It's not reflective of who we are, we're Anishinabek, just like the Métis are the Métis and the Inuit are the Inuit. They're not just Aboriginal."

Madahbee doesn't like the sweeping name change because he says Indigenous peoples have been wrongly identified since the

arrival of the Europeans.

He says the debate about identity is not a new one. Madahbee remembers the constitutional talks in the 80s,

"That's where the name First Nations came into play. Names were being tossed around about how we should be referred to. Indigenous was too international, Native was too generic." He says Aboriginal was also mentioned and was shot down because First Nations are original inhabitants, and didn't like the negative connotation of the word.

Policy analyst Dr. Micheal Posluns says the name change has been on the way for a number of years. "The government, back to Mulroney, has had a minister called the Interlocutor for Métis. When Duncan was first appointed last year, he was also given that post as well as Minister of Indian Affairs."

"So, from the government's point of view, that giving him a shorter title will all fit onto one business card."

Posluns still wonders the same thing as some First Nation leaders.

"What's worrisome," he said, "is that it's not clear what the ministry's responsibility it has to each group."

Posluns says the primary duties of the minister to First Nations arise out of the department of Indian Affairs statutes and out of the many Supreme Court rulings, where the court has talked about the government's fiduciary responsibility for First Nations.

Posluns points to the ministry's Web site and says "It's interesting the department doesn't mention anything about its duty and legal obligation to First Nations in its opening paragraph about the name change."

Instead focus is put on the inclusive nature of the name change. Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Minister John Duncan writes in the second paragraph of the statement: "This change better reflects the scope of my Ministerial responsibilities with respect to First Nations, Inuit and Métis. The title is more up to date and inclusive, and is consistent with our Government's focus on moving forward in our relationship with Aboriginal peoples."

Guy Lonechild, Grand Chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations has similar concerns as Posluns and Madahbee about the name change. Plus, he worries about the treaty relationship that most First Nations have with the Crown.

Lonechild was also not happy that they weren't consulted about the name change in Saskatchewan. That's a substantial omission on behalf of the government. Posluns says the lack of consultation is a very valid point because the duty to consult has been the most emphasized by the court.

Also like Madahbee, Lonechild doesn't like the generic approach to the name. He says, "We prefer to have a distinct mention and recognition of First Nations



PHOTO: FILE

Guy Lonechild, Grand Chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations

people because of the treaty relationship, and the Constitution maintains that First Nations are distinct with inherent and treaty rights and rights to self government and land. We prefer not to use the word Aboriginal, and it's not something that's widely used in Saskatchewan."

Lonechild says, "It's not a step in the right direction, in terms of lumping us together as 'Aboriginal.'" He also hopes the name change is not a change in policy direction.

Lonechild doesn't want the treaty relationship to get lost in the blanket term.

"There needs to be a good understanding and appreciation of our history," he said. "Treaties are important and a bridge to the future, and treaty relationships

should be strengthened and respected."

Lonechild suggests the modernizing of a departmental name change should reflect a treaty relationship.

"If we could look at a Treaty Relations Secretariat or a Treaty Relations Office in Canada, that would be a step in the right direction."

In addition to treaty relationship with government, Madahbee also discussed the importance of treaties as nation-to-nation legal agreements.

Not only is the name change unwelcome, Madahbee also sees the move as a harbinger of more change. He says, "it's an attempt like the governance act to municipalize and minimize our standing in this country."

Silver medal disappoints Iroquois Nationals

By Sam Laskaris
Windspeaker Contributor

PRAGUE, Czech Republic

The Iroquois Nationals once again proved they are among the world's best lacrosse players.

The club won the silver medal at the world indoor (box) lacrosse championships, which concluded on May 28.

Canada defeated the Iroquois Nationals 13-6 in the gold-medal contest at the tournament, which was staged in Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic.

The world indoor tournament has been held three times. Each time the Iroquois Nationals have placed second, behind only Canada.

The Canadians had thumped the Iroquois Nationals 21-4 in the final of the inaugural world tourney, held in Hamilton in 2003. A much closer championship final resulted at the 2007 championships in Halifax, as Canada edged the Iroquois Nationals 15-14 in a match decided in overtime.

Members of the Iroquois Nationals felt this was the best squad they had assembled and were seeking a gold medal this time

around.

So that's why they were somewhat disappointed, even with winning the silver medal once again.

"Our expectations were higher than what we got," said Cody Jamieson, who was an offensive spark with the Iroquois Nationals, accumulating 22 points, including 16 goals in five games.

Jamieson, who is from Six Nations, Ont. and plays professionally with the Rochester Knighthawks of the National Lacrosse League, was one of two Iroquois Nationals' players named to the tournament all-star team.

He was also chosen as the top transition player at the world event, which featured eight clubs.

Sid Smith, who like Jamieson is also from Six Nations and toils in the NLL for Rochester, was also a tournament all-star and was selected as the event's top defender.

Early on it appeared the gold-medal match in Prague would be closer than it did end up being.

Canada led just 2-1 after the opening quarter. But the Canadians then took control of the match by outscoring the Iroquois Nationals 7-1 in the second quarter.

(See *Silver* on page 12.)



PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Cody Jamieson (right), who is from Six Nations, Ont. and plays with the Rochester Knighthawks of the National Lacrosse League, was one of two Iroquois Nationals' players named to the tournament all-star team.

Gathering attracts participants from around the world



ALL PHOTOS: DOUG PYPER

A ceremonial circle at the arbour was part of the week long International Indigenous Leadership Gathering 2011 near Lillooet, B.C. from May 30 - June 5, 2011

By Doug Pyper
Windspeaker Contributor

LILLOOET, B.C.

The message was as clear and consistent as the ongoing traditional beating of the drums. The guest speakers, the ceremonies, and all who attended the week long International Indigenous Leadership Gathering 2011 near Lillooet, B.C. echoed the mantra of "Protecting the Sacred."

The collective voice spoke of renewed reverence for Mother Earth, love and compassion among humankind, and respect for all living things that share our terrestrial home.

In his welcoming speech Chief Mike Leach stated "We are at a crossroads and the Indigenous people of Turtle Island are being called upon by the Creator to lead the world to a new awakening. It is time to balance the material with the spiritual. To reconnect into the Circle of Life.

"As prophesized, a time of cleansing is upon us. We are in the final days of a great cycle and Mother Earth is sending us strong messages through catastrophic natural events and global warming of a coming transformation. Those who are not awake (materially based people) are living in fear—vaguely sensing something is terribly wrong. Those who are awake to the signs must be the messengers. We, the people of this world, are all Indigenous. We must find connections, not differences."

The Third Annual Gathering held May 30 to June 5 was hosted by the Sta'at'imc Chiefs Council representing 11 First Nation communities, and made possible by the hard work of a core group of local organizers and the generous commitment of countless attending volunteers.

The tireless work of Darryl Bob and Coordinator Jackie Andrew deserves special mention. The free

event took place on the Xaxl'ip, Sta'at'imc Territory in a beautiful grassy meadow behind the home of Traditional Chief Darryl Bob, his wife Teresa and their seven children.

All people from around the world were welcome and attendance numbered in the thousands. Over the course of the week the land transformed into a communal village of tents, teepees, campers and RV's surrounded by the lush pristine Cascade Mountains.

All strived to share their personal messages and took part in discussions. There were morning and evening sweat lodges, morning pipe ceremonies, sunrise meditations by the small creek, and a Pit Lodge housing a fire that burned the entire time under the diligent care of fire keepers.

All food was provided, prepared and served on site with a morning brunch and an evening dinner. Out of respect, Elders, expectant mothers and mothers with small children were always served first.

The agenda each afternoon alternated between traditional ceremonies and Indigenous guest speakers from near and far.

The "open pipe" ceremony of the first day welcomed everyone to participate in drumming, prayer, and passing (smoking) of the pipes in a ceremonial circle, creating a spiritual bond between all at the outset.

Over two dozen speakers graced the stage overall, each sharing inspiring and meaningful thoughts. To note merely a few:

An entourage from Mexico telling (through an interpreter) of Canadian mining companies raping the resources and lands of Indigenous people, similar to what is commonplace in Central and South America.

The youngest speaker was Asma Maryam Ali, a Muslim university student from Toronto. Currently a qualified teacher, she is studying for a master's degree focused on incorporating

Indigenous teachings into environmental education.

"We must seek unity and understanding among all Indigenous peoples worldwide...indeed all mankind," she said.

A more Eastern perspective was offered by Geshe Yongdong, a Tibetan monk since age seven. He escaped from the Chinese occupation of Tibet and is now living on Vancouver Island. His words of Buddhist wisdom were "Our greatest enemies are anger, greed and ignorance, especially anger. We must strive to live more in our heart than in our head. One must learn to nurture and love oneself. Only by doing so can one love others."

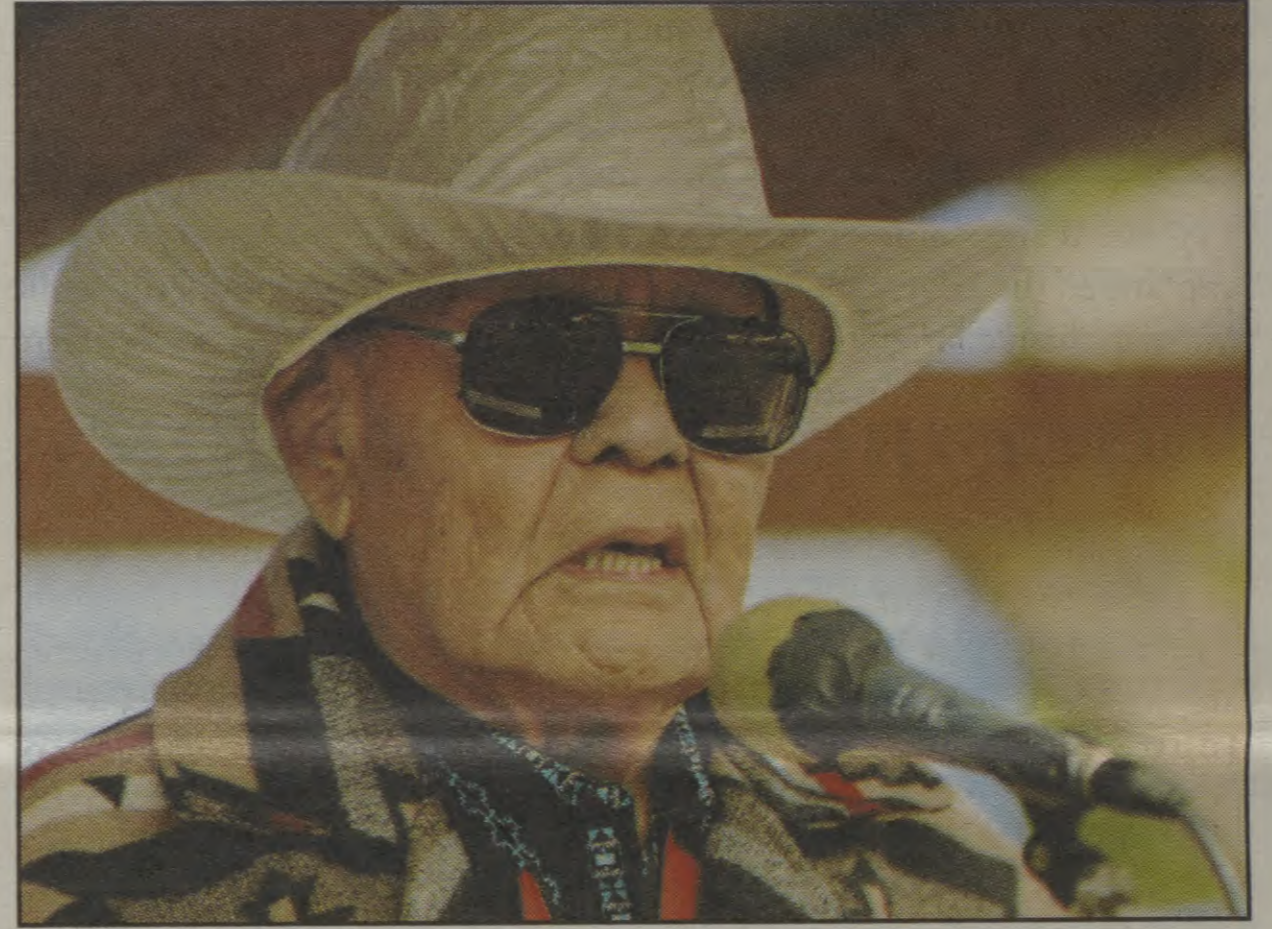
Hereditary Chief Phil Lane Jr. is a member of the Yankton Dakota and Chickasaw First Nations and an international leader in human and community development. He spoke of drug and alcohol addiction among the Indigenous population. His infectious humour prevailed as he laughed

"Addiction is the best possible disease to contract, because the only way out is a spiritual path"

A light-hearted approach to a serious message. He was also one of the leaders in a drum ceremony honouring the sacred pipe of Crazy Horse, which was brought to the Gathering.

And finally two revered Elders: Mona Polacca, a member of the 13 Indigenous grandmothers, said "Woman are the seeds of compassion and it is our responsibility to pray for future generations and to save the world for our precious children."

Elder Tom Crane Bear, Blackfoot teacher, spiritual and life leader from the Siksika Nation, offered enthralling wisdom for all, having led a life from residential schools, alcoholism and skid row, to high school graduation at 53 and recognition by the Canadian and International governments for his dedication and teachings. Now in



Respected Elder, teacher and spiritual leader from Siksika Nation - Tom Crane Bear spoke to the attendees.



Mona Polacca, representative of the Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers.



Asma Ali from Toronto was a guest speaker.

his eighties he is an inspiration to all mankind. Here is a mere taste of his near hour long speech.

"Be passionate about what you do or you will be defeated."

"They tried to take our culture and our language through residential schools, but it didn't work. Later generations have given it up voluntarily through assimilation by white culture. It

is now the responsibility of Elders to pass on the language and heritage before we die and the responsibility of younger generations to learn and preserve our culture."

In the end the Gathering was less about words and more about spiritual energy. It embodied a gift of hope that all took home with them.

[strictly speaking] Play not so Fantastick from this P.O.V.

It seems there is much ado about something in the city of Toronto these days, and oddly enough, it's in the theatre world.

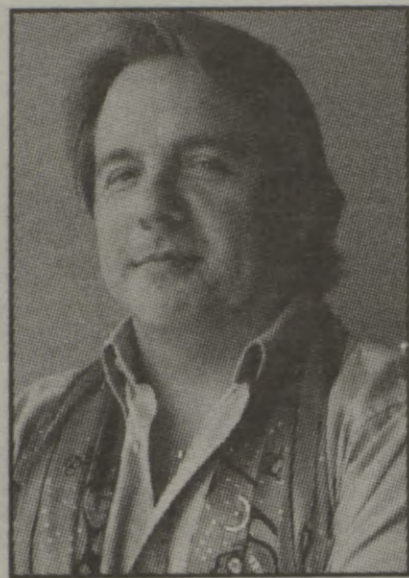
It seems Soulpepper Theatre's recent production of the 1960 classic musical *The Fantasticks* has raised the ire of many local Aboriginal artists.

One of the canon's most beloved musicals is, in itself, rather innocuous, all except the inclusion of one character half way through the first act. His name is Mortimer, and he's got a cockney accent, and is dressed as an Indian. A flagrantly over the top, stereotypical, war-paint wearing, bumbling fool Indian, who's not really an Indian we're told. And as another fellow playwright once wrote, 'Aye, there's the rub'.

Many people in the Native theatre community have some severe issues with that character, who in the context of the play is an itinerant actor hired to help in the pretend abduction of a young woman to make her fall in love with a young man.

So that's how White people fall in love. I've always wondered.

According to the stage directions, Mortimer "emerges



THE URBANE INDIAN Drew Hayden Taylor

dressed in a loin cloth and a feather, and playing a drum".

Tara Beagen, the Artistic Director of Native Earth Performing Arts, Canada's premiere Native theatre company, has issues with Mortimer and the play. She and a group of fellow artists saw the play and had the same general reaction.

In a letter to Soulpepper's Artistic Director Albert Schultz and his Board of Directors Beagen writes "the portrayal of the imbecilic actor in costume as an 'Indian' in the *Fantasticks* was so offensive to me that I actually had to concentrate on breathing. I felt winded - as though I had suffered a blow to the gut. That was followed by nausea and then numbness."

The response from other First Nations patrons was essentially the same. After all this Tara invited me to see the play, and I did.

In all fairness, the whole play reeks of political incorrectness. Not quite believing what I saw and wanting to make sure I saw what I saw, I found a copy of the text and read it. There exists within the play a song titled "Oh rape! Sweet Rape!" Believe it or not, it goes something like this:

*"We can get the rape emphatic.
We can get the rape polite.
We can get the rape with Indians:
A truly charming sight.
So you see the sort of rape
Depends on what you play."*

Not quite the *Lion King*, is it? Plus, this ode to rape is sung by

the young couple's fathers. Upon investigation, I was told that in some circles back then, this kind of reference i.e. rape, meant an abduction rather than an act of sexual violence.† Still, it kind of grates on the conscience a bit.† Elsewhere in the play, there is a line where one of the other itinerant actors yells to his cockney faux First Nations buddy:

"Indians ready? Indians - rape!
Indians angry!"

There have been obvious steps to update this play, which has been one of the most successful and longest running musicals in Broadway history.† However in many recent productions, this particular song has been omitted and a new, more politically correct song inserted. And I noticed in the Toronto production, a line of text had been altered. The leader of the actors says to the audience "He's not actually Native American." In the context of that play, that stood out. In the original text, the line actually reads "He's not actually Indian." And the 'Indians - rape!' line was changed to "Indians - abduct!"

Now here's the problem. I am

completely sympathetic with A.D. Beagen's opinion. Still, it should be said it is a white guy, playing a white guy, playing an Indian. I do not believe the play was meant at any point to be an accurate or realistic portrayal of Native life.

Mortimer makes his entrance and exit by climbing out of a box at centre stage. It is a play of its time. As a Native person and artist, I wouldn't want other non-Native artists to be fearful of producing or being forced to edit pre-existing works. Though *The Fantasticks* isn't 1/100th nearly as good, where would *Tom Sawyer* be without Injun Joe or *The Merchant of Venice* be without Shylock?

My response to Mortimer the Indian wasn't quite as visceral as Ms Beagen's and the rest. With that being said, I did feel an itch when the audience laughed at the cartoonish antics of Mortimer. Imagine the wit, wisdom and cultural sensitivity of a member of the Three Stooges dressed as an Indian. Alas, I did not laugh. I did not sing along. I did not enjoy myself. As a theatre artist and patron, I think that says more.

Silver medal disappoints

(Continued from page 10.)

"That really defined the game," Jamieson said. "They got on a good run and we couldn't stop it."

The teams then scored four goals apiece in the second half. "We're not 100 per cent satisfied with the silver," said Iroquois Nationals' general manager Ansley Jemison. "It was definitely a disappointment to win that. We felt we had put together a team that was capable of winning the gold medal."

The club squared off against Ireland in its tournament opener and came away with a convincing 23-3 victory. That was followed by another lopsided win, 25-5 over the host Czechs.

The Iroquois Nationals then received their first true test at the championships in their final round-robin contest. And they responded with a slim 11-10 triumph over the United States.

Then, with a berth in the championship final on the line, the Iroquois Nationals handily defeated the Czechs once again, 19-6 this time, in their semi-final match.

Iroquois Nationals' coach Duane Jacobs, who is a coach with the NLL's Buffalo Bandits, also expressed disappointment at coming up short in the gold-medal battle.

"I don't think anybody is satisfied getting the silver," he said.

Jacobs added his side was facing a rather formidable foe in the final. "You look at their lineup and they had all pro players," he said. "We had half."

Despite their disappointment at not winning gold, members of the Iroquois Nationals were still nonetheless pleased just in being able to participate at the

tournament.

Many of the team's players were among those who were caught up in a passport fiasco last summer and were prevented from competing at the world field lacrosse tournament in England.

Officials from the United Kingdom did not allow members of that squad to enter England with their Haudenosaunee passports.

So even though the Iroquois Nationals were viewed as a medal contender for the tournament in England, they were forced to withdraw from that event.

Jemison said all those who were part of the Iroquois Nationals entourage this year travelled to the Czech Republic with their Haudenosaunee passports.

"That was amazing," Jemison said. "That was certainly appreciated and we thank the Czech Republic officials for all they did for us."

Jacobs though said the Iroquois Nationals' journey did have a few glitches - while the team was catching connecting flights in Switzerland, to and from the Czech Republic.

Jacobs said some customs officials in Switzerland had never seen Haudenosaunee passports before and supervisors had to be summoned before those being questioned were allowed to proceed.

Jamieson, one of the players who had been scheduled to compete at last year's world tournament in England, said team members were thrilled at being allowed to travel with their preferred Haudenosaunee passports to Prague.

"That was a positive right off the bat," he said.

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Reach out for help in dealing with your uncle

Dear Auntie:

My uncle is an important person in my life. He sits and teaches me stories and songs and he takes me hunting with him and talks about the land, and all kinds of interesting stuff. But lately, he's been different. He's been drinking, and he's not the same person. My mom says she doesn't want me around his house anymore. Says something bad is going to happen someday there. I want my uncle back. What can I do?

Signed
Missing My Relative



DEAR AUNTIE

By J'net AyAy Qwa
Yak Sheelth Cavanagh

anniversary of a loss or a number of untold experiences that may fuel your uncle's stress levels.

When it comes to your mom asking you not to go around his house for fear of something bad happening, get more information. Her caution is too vague. When we do not know what is going on humans tend to make up stuff to bring down feelings of uncertainty.

If the fear is that your uncle may hurt himself because he has said so or has made suicide attempts in the past, ask your mom if this is a real or imagined concern. With more information you can begin to make a wellness plan for both you and your uncle.

Whether suicidal feelings are involved or not you will want to think who in your community

offers professional crisis support or referral options. This may even be a call to the kids' helpline, crisis line, youth worker or local hospital to build up support for your uncle.

Ideally, you have a support worker that can make a visit on your behalf or go with you to see your uncle. Visit with someone as a way for your uncle to be on his best behavior and witness your concern and love for him.

Take a risk and be honest with your uncle about how his drinking and isolation makes you feel. Remember all you like to do together and make a plan to make time for each other by phone and visits outside his house, even just a short walk around to help break the isolation.

Explore what support your

uncle needs and hope he opens up for you to join him on his continued journey.

Lovingly, Auntie

Dear Auntie:

So, my mom is getting married again. I don't like it. It's only been two years since my father passed, and now she's found a replacement. And I don't like the guy. He's OK, but I think he's just trying to use my mom to make his life easier. She wants me to be involved in planning the wedding, but I'd rather not. I don't want to start a war, so how do I tell her to keep me out of it.

Signed,
Got better things to do

Dear Got better things to do:

Father's Day just passing will surely have stirred up the grief for your dad further and your mom's preparation for the next chapter in her life is, no doubt, bittersweet.

I think your ability to be honest with the limits of how supportive you can be is realistic, as everyone grieves in their own time and own ways. There is no need to feel that you must keep up with your mom's pace to overcome the loss of your dad.

Your mom has her process and understanding of what she needs to plan her upcoming wedding. On the one hand she could be asking you to be in the wedding party, and the opposite might be rounding up food for the feast.

A grown-up conversation will need to happen with your mom about how you feel. I have learned over the years that the difference between complaining and communicating is the latter requires you to ask for what you need.

Assuming you have some interest, however modest, that will support your mom, you will need to declare a boundary of how you will be involved in the wedding.

Bridesmaids/best friends can take on the nitty gritty details in

the planning and you will need to decide what you can offer.

In the spirit of being honest explore a compromise – which can be described as a co-promise and understanding of what everyone is comfortable with.

The community's eyes will be on your family as the wedding plans take shape. While you may not be thrilled, this is your mom's journey toward meeting her own needs and a day she feels worth celebrating.

The bittersweet truth is that your dad cannot be replaced but your mom wants that intimacy in her life again; she wants to love again is her reality. This is an emotional fine line but your grief and your mom's wedding are two different outcomes of a common loss.

Perhaps one day you will appreciate your mom's choice but she is role modeling how she deals with loss and we can hope it works out for her.

For now find a close friend or relative who will join you to have a conversation with your mom about what you need as boundaries that respect your grief and does not get in the way of your mother's special day.

Practice ahead of time some possible ideas of how you are willing to contribute so that no matter where the conversation goes you have a bottom-line of what you are comfortable with.

Lovingly, Auntie

Do you have a question for Auntie? If so, please send the question via email to: letters@ammsa.com.

Please make sure the subject line states Dear Auntie.

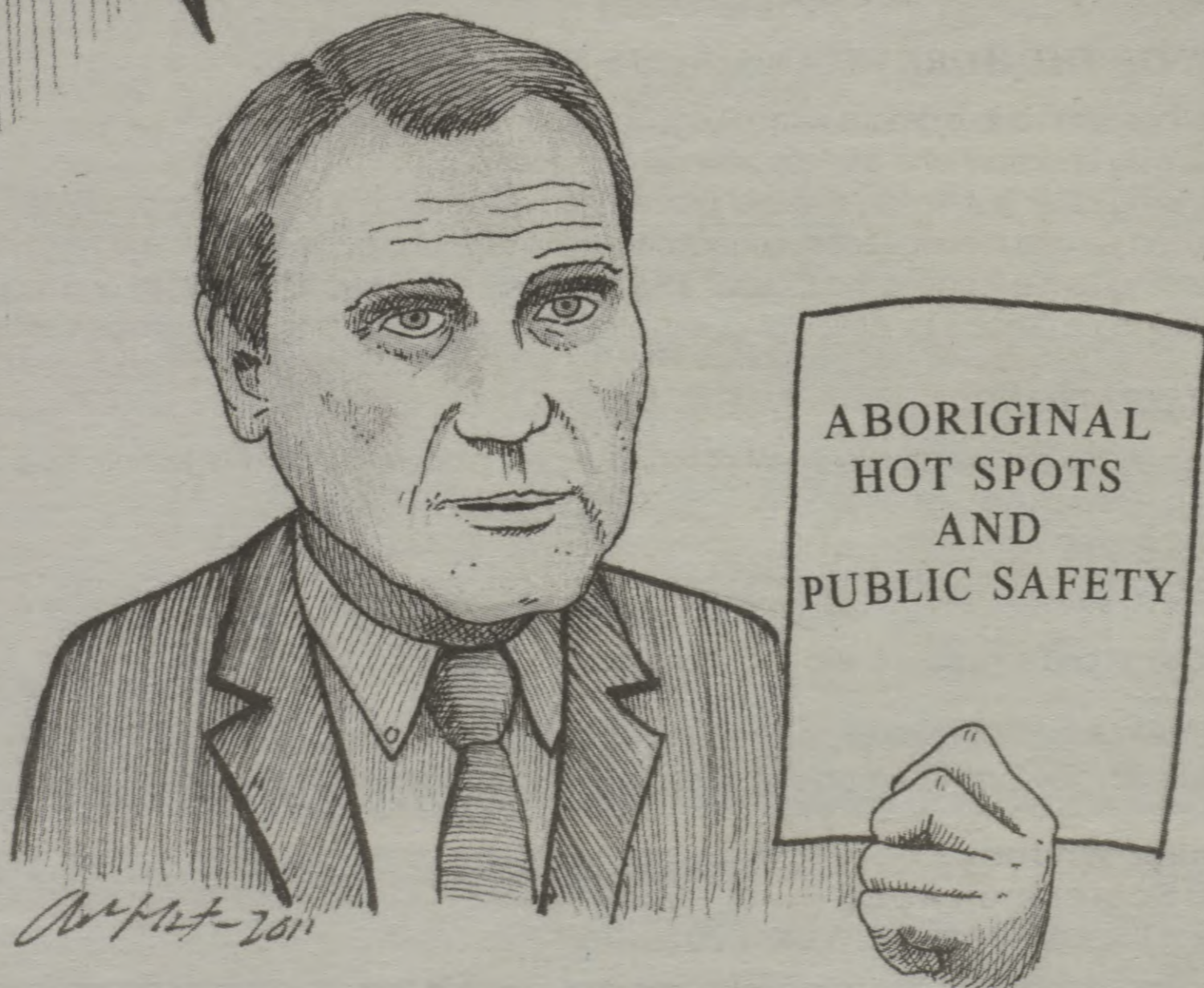
Editor's Note: The Ask Auntie column is published for readers' entertainment and consideration only. The opinions expressed are those of the author and are not necessarily endorsed by Windspeaker or the Aboriginal Multi-Media Society.

Rank Comix

by Adam Martin

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BC First Nations take next step in health governance

By Shauna Lewis
Raven's Eye Writer

VANCOUVER

History was made on May 26 when the vast majority of 167 B.C. Aboriginal leaders voted in favour of a resolution framework that promises to open the door to First Nations-controlled healthcare.

Close to 500 people attended the fourth annual Gathering Wisdom for a Shared Journey 2011 Forum on the Tripartite First Nations Health Plan in Richmond May 24 to May 26. Only band chiefs or their proxies were permitted to vote on the resolution, however.

The framework, which will guide the development of a First Nations health authority, was created by information gathered by the First Nations Health Council (FNHC). The FNHC was created in 2007 to provide leadership in the implementation of the Tripartite First Nation Health Plan.

The 10-year Health Plan, signed by Canada, British Columbia and the FNHC, was designed to improve the quality of health and wellbeing for First Nations, as well as close the gaps in health outcomes between First Nations and non-Natives. The FNHC is made up of 15 Aboriginal representatives from the four regions of BC: the North, Interior, Fraser and Vancouver Island.

Since 2008, input gathered from community-based engagement hubs and 120 regional and sub-regional caucus sessions has been documented in five regional summary reports and then crafted into one Consensus Paper which outlines collective principles, values and mandates of all First Nations in BC with respect to future health governance.

"In my view this is a great opportunity to start building and delivering the understanding of actually taking a part in self-governance," said Cliff Atleo Sr, president of the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council. He occupies one of three Vancouver Island regional seats on the First Nations Health Council.

Although still in the early stages of development, those who approved the resolution say its adoption is a major step forward and many credit the FNHC for their work in the process.

"I've been involved in this kind of work for over 30 years," the FNHC co-chair, Grand Chief Doug Kelly, told conference participants. "This is by far the healthiest, strongest, wisest, most determined council that I've ever had the privilege to serve with," he said.



PHOTO: SHAUNA LEWIS

Jody Wilson Raybould, regional chief for BC, Assembly of First Nations

Kelly said the only request he made prior to the resolution vote was that people would make educated decisions on how they cast their ballot.

"When you consider saying yes, we want you to know what it means when you say yes," he said. "But if you say no, we want you to know what it means to say no," he told conference participants.

Kelly also expressed the importance of coming together as a First Nations collective, saying there is strength in the unity of First Nations people and communities.

"I encourage people to stay united," agreed Jim Roberts of the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board. "There are going to be a lot of processes of institutions that try to divide and conquer through obstacles and barriers to the process," he warned. BC may be the first province to approach this kind of self-determination in health, but Roberts has been involved in the United States Indian self-governance movement for years. He says there are many benefits to self governance if communities remained focused.

"It's a very dynamic process [and] it's a very interesting time and it may seem daunting at times regarding the task before you," he advised. "[But] when tribes or Indian people take management of their own programs and services from others...what you end up with is a much better system."

"Unity is power," echoed Ron Allen of the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe in Washington State and chairman of the National Advisory Committee of Self Governance Tribes.

"If you're not unified you don't need an enemy. [Just] look across the table," he said to applause.

Mark Point from the Skowkale



PHOTO: SHAUNA LEWIS

Voting on the resolution took place May 26 at the Gathering Wisdom Conference held in Richmond.

band of the Stolo First Nation agreed.

"We're only as strong as our weakest link," he pointed out. "If we look good on the outside but we stink on the inside then we haven't done very much," he added.

But while some gave advice and

acknowledged concerns regarding what the resolution means for BC communities, others maintained that the need for First Nations independence and authority over health care was well worth the risk.

"As far as we can get away from that red tape that Indian Affairs and the federal and provincial

governments put us in, we want to move that way," expressed Joan Manual, proxy for Chief Judy Wilson of the Neskonlith Indian Band in the BC Interior. "We don't want to be dictated to forever. We want to have a say," she said.

(See *Next Step* on page 21.)

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- Focusing on and making recommendations re: the referral process.
- Presenting to the P'egp'ig'lha Council and/or the three Councils as requested and required.
- Establishing a process for developing, implementing and evaluating the management plan.

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We appreciate the interest of all applicants, however, only those selected for interviews will be contacted.

Ontario Birchbark: Special Section providing news from Ontario

Community now gets to decide on land settlement

By Shari Narine
Birchbark Writer

RAMA FIRST NATION

It will be the largest specific land claim settlement in Canada's history and the first time multiple First Nations will be involved, so First Nations chiefs are hopeful that within the next five months members will ratify an agreement that has been in the making for 30 years.

"We're hoping to move this along as expeditiously as possible without rushing," said Rama First Nation Chief Sharon Stimson Henry. "We're hoping by the end of the year."

On March 24, the federal government offered a \$307-million settlement agreement to the south-central Ontario First Nations of Chippewas of Rama, Chippewas of Georgina Island, Beausoleil, and Chippewas of Nawash for land taken in what was the Coldwater-Narrows reserve.

The 10,673 acres runs about 14 miles long by one and a half miles wide along an old portage route between present-day Orillia and

Matchedash Bay on Lake Huron.

A second component of the settlement agreement gives the First Nations the option to purchase up to 10,673 acres of land and apply to the federal government to have those lands designated as reserve land. The First Nations have up to 30 years to buy land and start the reserve creation process.

The Coldwater-Narrows claim settlement offer came from the government nearly two-and-a-half years after negotiations were concluded.

"The (negotiations) came to an end fall of 2008 and we've waited for the government to give us a mandate, an offer to settle," said Beausoleil Chief Roly Monague in an interview with Nation Talk.

The Rama, Georgina Island and Beausoleil First Nations began negotiating with the federal government in 2002. The Namash First Nation joined the negotiation process in 2007 when it was determined that they were successors to some of the reserve's original residents. The Chippewas of Namash had moved to Colpoy's Bay before eventually leaving there and

amalgamating with Cape Croker.

Monague said a distribution formula has been established which will see the Rama, Georgina Island and Beausoleil First Nations each receive 30 per cent of the settlement dollars while Namash will receive 10 per cent.

Stimson Henry has been involved with the process the entire way. Monthly meetings occurred over the years and some months had more than a single meeting. Stimson Henry said she was told by government officials and negotiators that she didn't have to be in attendance.

"It was my responsibility to be there, to ensure that I had the opportunity as leader of my community to ask or inquire about anything I saw going on that I could give input on for the benefit of my particular membership," said Stimson Henry. Sitting at the negotiation table was her priority.

Monague was present when the negotiations began in 2002 and stayed through until 2006 when he left politics. He returned last summer.

The process has been long and

arduous.

The claim was researched for more than 20 years before being submitted to the federal government in 1991, said Stimson Henry. It took until 2002 to be accepted.

Monague said the Beausoleil, Rama and Georgina Island First Nations settled in the Coldwater area as an experiment to see if the three First Nations could farm and survive. In 1836, they signed agreements which, they were led to believe, allowed them to stay. Instead, the agreements forced them to give up the land.

"It has taken quite a number of years to get the government to acknowledge that we were defrauded of the land," said Monague.

Community meetings have already begun on the First Nations. The membership will determine how their portion of the settlement money will be dispersed. This money will be put into trust agreements for their communities.

"When we think about everything we've lost over the years, the economic opportunities, the social

challenges we've endured so many years, the healing that needs to occur, I believe if we think in that direction, if we think that our future generations don't have to suffer in the same way we did, this claim can go a long way," said Monague.

Stimson Henry wouldn't comment on whether each band member will receive an individual sum from the settlement.

For the settlement agreement to be accepted the majority of voting members for each First Nation must cast ballots in favour. That is the outcome both Monague and Stimson Henry are confident will occur.

"We're not contemplating the deal not being ratified," said Stimson Henry, who said that all First Nation will hold their ratification votes at the same time.

Monague doesn't anticipate the first federal cheques being cut until spring of 2012.

"Today it's something that's been long standing; it's an offer that's on the table. It will never acknowledge our losses (but) it'll certainly assist us in moving forward for the benefit of future generations," said Monague.

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[health] Friend knew that she would be a match

By Shauna Lewis
Windspeaker Contributor

VANCOUVER

Three years ago, two First Nations women in British Columbia were complete strangers. Today, one woman is planning to give the other the ultimate gift—the gift of life.

When 19-year-old Alissa Derrick of the Wetsuweten First Nation in Smithers, B.C. met Adrienne Charlie in 2009 she had no idea that the 33-year-old would play such an instrumental role in saving her life.

The two met at an Aboriginal study space during their first year at Langara College, and became instant friends. So when Derrick began to suffer health issues and was diagnosed in the winter of 2010 with an aggressive form of kidney disease, she was lucky for the support of Charlie, her newfound friend.

But unlike others faced with a health crisis, Derrick didn't have the emotional support of her immediate family, other than that of her grandmother. Her biological father, who was Vietnamese, passed away in 2007, and her mother, who is First Nations from Haida Gwaii, has a mental disability as a result of being hit by a car when Derrick was a child.

Derrick, who has been on her own since she was 15, also said many of her old friends turned their backs on her through the ordeal.

"I pretty much lost all of my high school friends after I told them I was having a transplant," she said.

But family is what you make it and Derrick's group of college mates stepped up to fill the void.

"My family has become people who aren't my [biological] family," Derrick said. "I'm more comfortable with these people I've known for less than two years," she added.

Charlie is part of that new family.

"She told me her story and I said, 'I'll be your mom,'" Charlie explained. "I take care of everybody," said the mother of two.

Derrick's newfound circle of friends has been her primary support group through her health difficulties; a few even stepping up to offer their kidneys to Derrick.

But the young woman admitted that when she was initially told that she would need a transplant, she considered ignoring the life-saving surgery.

"I wasn't going to have [a transplant] at first, to be honest," she said.

"I was so tired of the hospital appointments, the blood work, the whole experience and getting cut open and the lifestyle changes I was going to have to make with it," she said. "It was a really rough period." Derrick explained the health crisis was compounded by



PHOTO: SHAUNA LEWIS

Alissa Derrick and Adrienne Charlie were linked by friendship, and now they will be linked for life, through Charlie's gift of a kidney.

a break up with her fiancée and various financial issues.

But support and encouragement from friends helped Derrick realize she had no choice but to follow through and find a suitable donor.

Charlie said that when she realized Derrick's need for a transplant, she instinctively knew she would become her donor, despite facing scepticism from physicians.

"The doctors thought I wasn't going to be a match," said the Squamish First Nation woman. "They told me 'You two are not related [and] she's Vietnamese.'"

But Charlie wasn't backing down.

"I told them right from the beginning that they might as well schedule us [for surgery] in June because that's going to give us enough [recovery] time to go back to school in September," she said.

And Charlie was right.

After filling out a lengthy medical and lifestyle questionnaire and going through invasive examinations and blood tests, Charlie was informed in May that she was a donor match for her new adoptive daughter; a daughter she lovingly calls her "mini me."

"When they told me I was a match I called Alissa and told her and we cried on the phone," said Charlie.

"I just knew I could help her," she added, while joking that she has two kidneys anyway.

Humour aside, however, the seriousness of the issue is not lost on the women.

"Right from the beginning I've been scared," admitted Charlie.

"We've been good at being 'light' about this situation, but we both know that we're both scared. We just don't talk about it," said Derrick.

"We mask it with humour," interjected Charlie.

But beneath their therapeutic jokes and smiles, it's clear the women are good for each other's morale during this difficult time and it's that kind of positivity that

will get them through their arduous post-surgical recovery period.

Doctors say post-surgical recovery will take between six to eight weeks, but Derrick thinks that estimate is generous.

"I think Adie and I will recover faster," she said, confidently.

While she knows that she will overcome this obstacle, Derrick also knows her ordeal is far from over. The young woman will have to take anti-rejection pills daily for the rest of her life and she will always be at a greater risk of cancer and kidney failure.

However, with an estimated 99 per cent transplant success rate, other concerns are insignificant to Derrick right now and she maintains that right now she is just thrilled and thankful to have a second chance at life.

"I get to experience what other people get to experience," Derrick says of her future. "I get to experience having kids and getting married and graduating school," she added.

"It's hard to describe how grateful I am," she said of Charlie's kidney donation. "There's no gift I could ever give her [in return]. What do you give a person who gives you your life?" she asks quietly.

But Charlie, who lost a very close friend to kidney failure, says the final outcome of this situation will be her biggest reward.

"I'm doing it because she gets her life," she said.

"She just works so hard [and] she didn't give up. Some people wallow in self-pity, but she doesn't. She didn't stop and she just deserves to do more," Charlie said.

"We just know it's going to work," Charlie added with a smile.

"Yeah, we're going to be ok," nodded Derrick.

The kidney transplant surgery is scheduled for June 27 at St Paul's Hospital in Vancouver. Along with donating her kidney, Charlie has hosted various fundraising events to help support Derrick in her recovery.

New grief comes as women, children remain unprotected

Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief Shawn Atleo was, at the time of *Windspeaker's* press deadline, set to address delegates of the National Aboriginal Women's Forum in Vancouver June 16, continuing his call for adequate support for families and prevention measures to end violence against Indigenous women across Canada.

"My heart goes out to the many families, friends and supporters impacted by violence against Indigenous women in British Columbia and across Canada, most recently the Gunning and Knott families at this particularly difficult time," said Atleo.

Rene Gunning disappeared Feb. 18, 2005. She was 19 when she was last seen outside West Edmonton Mall with 16-year-old Krystle Knott. The two girls told friends they were planning to hitchhike to either Fort St. John or Dawson Creek, B.C. On the May long weekend, a group of campers from Grande Prairie discovered two skulls a half-hour southeast of the city.

First Nation leadership across Canada have made ending violence against Indigenous women a key priority.

National Chief Atleo and the AFN continue to advocate for safety and security for all First Nation citizens and to lessening the vulnerability among First Nations, reads a press release about Atleo's address to the forum.

The AFN has achieved commitments from premiers,

territorial leaders and provincial ministers of Aboriginal Affairs through the Council of the Federation and the Parliamentary Aboriginal Affairs Working Group to support a national strategy to prevent violence against Indigenous women.


"Among other efforts, this national forum is a step in the right direction, but more attention is required. We cannot continue to allow our women and children to be in unsafe and vulnerable situations.

"Dedicated and urgent attention to resolving ongoing cases of missing and murdered women is essential. There must be support at all levels for community-based programs that focus on prevention and addressing the root causes."

The National Aboriginal Women's Forum, a collaboration to end violence, took place June 15 to 17. The forum was co-hosted by B.C.'s Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation and the Native Women's Association of Canada. More than 200 delegates representing the provinces, territories and First Nation, Métis and Inuit organizations were expected to attend.

"AFN will continue to support efforts seeking justice for the families of missing and murdered women in B.C. and Canada," said Atleo, adding that AFN has presented to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women and received standing at the BC Missing Women Commission of Inquiry.

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Windspeaker business briefs

TASEKO MINES LTD. CALLED ON FIRST

Nations leaders to take another look at its Prosperity mine in BC and work with the company as it tries to revive its proposal after a federal environmental review rejected it. President and chief executive Russell Hallbauer acknowledged the concerns raised by Ottawa and the First Nations about the mine and the company has revised its plan for the project. The Tsilhqot'in Nation has called on Ottawa and the provincial government to reject the revised project because it does not address the issues around Fish Lake raised in the first review. "The lake's cultural and ecological values will not be 'saved' by this proposal and none of the other significant adverse affects identified by the Review Panel have been resolved by the 'New Prosperity' proposal," the group MiningWatch Canada said. While the lake will no longer be drained under the new plan, it will remain within the mine site and will be inaccessible to other users. "This equally damaging proposal was submitted with zero consultation with the Tsilhqot'in Nation who in fact received the submission after it had already been sent to both governments," said Chief Joe Alphonse, tribal chairman of the Tsilhqot'in Nation and Chief of Tl'etinqox-t'in. The British Columbia New Democrats say improved consultation with First Nations and an enhanced environmental assessment process will be better for mining in the province than the Liberal record of confrontation. "Governments have a legal and moral obligation to consult with First Nations on significant projects proposed for their traditional territory," said ND Aboriginal relations critic Scott Fraser. "But as we've seen with previous decisions, working with First Nations is also a way of ensuring that projects that are in the best interests of all parties move ahead." He said one of the reasons that the Mount Milligan project in northern B.C. went ahead was because some of the First Nations in the region were brought onside early in the process. "Contrast that with Taseko's gold-copper mine in the Cariboo, where the B.C. Liberals have poisoned the relationship with the Tsilhqot'in by pushing ahead without adequate consultation. That's a big part of the reason that project is stalled." Fraser said newly elected Premier Christy Clark had barely finished her acceptance speech at the Liberal convention before she was trying to get the Prime Minister to change the federal government's mind on the mine," said Deputy energy and mines critic Doug Donaldson. "British Columbians want a healthy mining industry, but they also want good environmental protection. By using her first conversation with the prime minister to try to overturn the review, the premier dismissed the legitimate environmental concerns that the Tsilhqot'in and others had expressed," he said.

YELLOW QUILL FIRST NATION IN SASK.

will invest \$29 million of the band's Treaty Land Entitlement Framework Agreement Settlement to enhance economic development, training and job opportunities for its people. Yellow Quill First Nation is located about 250 km east of Saskatoon. In 1993 the Yellow Quill First Nation settled its outstanding treaty land claim through the Saskatchewan Treaty Land Entitlement Framework Agreement. Under the agreement, Yellow Quill First Nation completed a selection of less than 17,000 acres of land to be converted to reserve land. The remainder of its settlement monies will be used in economic development, investment and job opportunities for its band members.

FIRST NATIONS IN SASKATCHEWAN WANT TO

ensure they get a fair deal in regard to jobs and benefits from mining companies and those producing potash in their territories and they are calling on the province to help. The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations believes potash companies operating in Saskatchewan should enter into revenue sharing deals with First Nations and to consult with them about mining projects. "It's certainly something that we're asking for in terms of greater economic benefit. We feel that we've never given up the rights to natural resources," said Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations Chief Guy Lonechild. Premier Brad Wall, however, believes the kinds of restrictions being asked for would be bad for business. "I think if you start forcing it, if you start listing a bunch of rules, if you try to put a gun to the head of these companies, it might be counter-productive, because they might just find a place where all those restrictions aren't there to invest. And that's not going to help anybody, either First Nations or non-First Nations."

NUNAVUMMIUT SIMON AWA AND AAJU PETER

have been recognized for their outstanding contributions to the Canadian fur and seal industry by the Canadian Fur Institute of Canada. "Simon Awa and Aaju Peter play important roles in defending the rights of all Canadian hunters," said Nunavut Minister of Environment, Daniel Shewchuk. "Nunavummiut should be proud to have these two outstanding individuals working on their behalf." Awa received the Jim Bourque Award in recognition of his commitment to the sustainable use of wildlife resources, improved animal welfare, the development of Canada's modern fur trade, recognition of Indigenous peoples' cultures, and the stewardship role that hunters and trappers play in the conservation and management of Canada's wildlife. Peter received the Bernard Cahill Memorial Award for volunteer contributions in promoting respect for people, animals and the environment at the community level with a global perspective.

[business]

Nations say BC Hydro skirting responsibility to consult



Chief Roland Willson of the West Moberly First Nation

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

By Shauna Lewis
Windspeaker Contributor

PEACE COUNTRY, BC

British Columbia Treaty 8 First Nations are furious. They say their right to meaningful consultation regarding the future development of a massive dam and hydroelectric generating station on their traditional land has been violated.

"We're being railroaded," claimed Chief Roland Willson of the West Moberly First Nation in northeastern, B.C.

"It's totally disrespectful," he said. "We're not just stakeholders; we have a constitutional right to the area."

On May 18, BC Hydro filed project documents with the federal and provincial governments, triggering the beginning of an extensive environmental assessment for the Peace River, B.C. site.

First Nations groups say their concerns have been overlooked by BC Hydro and the province and they are disappointed with the lack of transparency and consultation they have experienced throughout the planning process.

The Site C Clean Energy Project (Site C) is a proposed third dam and hydroelectric generating station on the river and it is part of the larger BC Hydro program to invest in and renew the province's electricity system.

Subject to approvals, the BC Hydro Site C plan has been touted as a project that will provide a source of clean and renewable electricity for more than 100 years. They say it would provide enough energy to power more than 450,000 homes per year in B.C., and energy costs would be about \$90 per megawatt hour compared to other resources costing nearly \$130 per megawatt hour.

The large-scale project will cost taxpayers nearly \$8 billion.

During stage two of the five-stage planning and development

process for the Peace River Site C Project, the mandate was to initiate consultations with Treaty 8 First Nation communities and stakeholders, as well as initiate a technical review of the potential Site C Project.

As part of BC Hydro's Stage 2 review, BC Hydro consulted with Doig River First Nation, Fort Nelson First Nation, Halfway River First Nation, Prophet River First Nation, Saulteau First Nation and the West Moberly First Nations, collectively known as BC Treaty 8 First Nations.

BC Hydro and Treaty 8 entered into a Consultation Agreement in December 2008. The agreement was designed to help guide the consultation process between parties. But First Nations groups say the consultation meetings have been nothing more than information sessions.

"It's not a consultation process when you've already determined the outcomes of the process," said Willson.

"They [BC Hydro] were already checking off some boxes that they had to do," he maintains.

"Consulting us 'after the fact' is not consultation," agreed Treaty 8 Tribal Chief, Liz Logan.

Logan says BC Hydro conveniently failed to discuss their stage two project reviews with them in a timely manner before filing it with federal and provincial departments.

"They called one of our project team members on May 16th saying that they were going to file on Wednesday May 18th and that they wanted to meet with Treaty 8 on Tuesday evening or Wednesday morning to 'brief' us before they filed," she explained, adding that Treaty 8 First Nations immediately contacted the Crown corporation to voice their surprise and disappointment at the announcement.

Logan suspects BC Hydro had the project description report (PDR) prepared well in advance and says First Nations should have been told much earlier that the company was nearing

completion of stage two.

"The opportunity to consult with us on the PDR was not there and we therefore informed BC Hydro that they had violated our right to meaningful consultation on a project that would impact our rights and way of life," she said.

But BC Hydro claims consultation has been ongoing and says the parties have met on 31 occasions and have exchanged more than 100 letters and 800 emails regarding the project.

"We've been consulting for well over two years," explained Dave Conway, BC Hydro community relations manager, adding that as a Crown corporation, BC Hydro has "a duty to consult Aboriginal groups in regard to anything the Crown is doing where there is Aboriginal rights and title to land."

But First Nations aren't buying it.

"Let's talk about what the content of the 31 meetings were," said Willson, pointing out that holding meetings and actually engaging in balanced meaningful dialogue are two separate things.

But BC Hydro defends their consultation process and stresses that the Site C energy plan is needed for the province; especially concerning the high domestic load demands.

"We do need it. We could use it," Conway said. "We're already importing energy to meet our domestic need at this moment [and] we're importing electricity at a high price to meet that demand."

Conway says BC exports and imports energy between Alberta and the United States.

As part of stage two, BC Hydro says it consulted with stakeholders, the community, Aboriginal groups and property owners in the area. Site research was also conducted and studies were preformed to help understand the current conditions of the physical, biological and socio-economic environment.

(Please see *Nations* on page 21.)

Dakota Brant — [windspeaker confidential]

Windspeaker: What one quality do you most value in a friend?

Dakota Brant: The reality checks! Any friend can be prepared to give you a hug and a shoulder to lean on, but strong spirited friends can help you collect your thoughts and ask you "what do you need to do to go from here?"

W.: What is it that really makes you mad?

D.B.: I am angered the most by the ignorance of the Canadian public at large as to the direct involvement of First Nations people within the foundation of this country, as well as our rights and freedoms. This country has had enough time to educate its citizens properly on what First Nations people have been through historically, where our rights stem from, our cultures and even our existence! From this time onward anger, racism and misrepresentation of our shared history based on a failure to educate Canada's citizenship is truly the fault of Canada's government and its lack of will to educate their own people.

W.: When are you at your happiest?

D.B.: When I wake up early in the morning to a pink and orange sunrise.

W.: What one person do you most admire and why?

D.B.: My greatest admiration goes to my late grandmother Ellie Brant; we called her "Mama". Mama attended residential school, learned how to cook and clean, and was married and with child by the time she was 15. She raised her own nine children and many others

because she was a mother and it just came as second nature to her, to love all children. After the kids were old enough, she did the first thing she ever wanted to do just for herself; she went to school. She became a psychiatric nurse because she loved to work with people. She just cared about people. Any feast or event that took place in our community, she would selflessly donate wild game from her own supply. She was also so proud to see my sisters and I gain fluency in Mohawk as her generation had lost it. In her life she never had the opportunities to travel and learn like I have had, and she stressed so much to me that I take those opportunities as they came. I owe my confidence and courage to try new things to her.

W.: What is the most difficult thing you've ever had to do?

D.B.: Being Miss Indian World. The position is so completely public in nature; it can become difficult to keep a calm and prepared demeanor publically when you are dealing with personal stress and losses. However, it does not take away from the absolute honour of representing your people. When you are Miss Indian World you need to prepare yourself to lead a life that may become difficult, however, it is beautiful as you are living to serve your people.

W.: What is your greatest accomplishment?

D.B.: To me accomplishments are direct impacts of hard work, and that everyone should benefit from them. While I have had some personal successes, I'll be grey haired before I've truly

accomplished anything.

W.: What one goal remains out of reach?

D.B.: Getting Ontario to rethink their land use plan where it doesn't involve moving all of their development in the next 20 years from their cities, outside of their greenbelt, and directly into the small amount of pristine territory that still exists within the Haldimand Proclamation lands that rightfully belong to our Haudenosaunee people.

W.: If you couldn't do what you're doing today, what would you be doing?

D.B.: Slaying dragons in far off lands! Haha, seriously, me not working to do the things I do today is even more unrealistic!

W.: What is the best piece of advice you've ever received?

D.B.: "Being a leader is like being a lady; if you have to tell people you are, you aren't."

W.: Did you take it?

D.B.: In every action I make, it's caused me to mentally "measure twice and cut once."

W.: How do you hope to be remembered?

D.B.: Hmm, I've never thought about being remembered. But I do know this, the things that we do today will one day be traditional, so the best way to be remembered is by starting some positive traditions that will benefit and bring happiness and prosperity to those unborn faces.

Teyotsihstokwathe Dakota Brant began her life on Aug. 11, 1987 on the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory of Southern Ontario. Her citizenship is with the Mohawk



PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Teyotsihstokwathe Dakota Brant

Nation, Turtle Clan. She always knew she wanted a university education and a career in which she could embrace her heritage as an Onkwehonwe person.

Dakota enrolled in Indigenous Studies at Trent University. When Trent offered a new program that aligned her two interests, she changed her program to the new Indigenous Environmental Studies program, coupling her passion for the environment and interest in Indigenous culture, knowing that this was where she was meant to be. She graduated with honours in 2010.

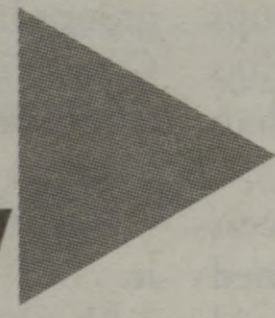
Dakota has a healthy portfolio of awards and honours. In 2005 she served as Miss Six Nations and travelled to Belgium and France. Also in 2005 she received the CIBC World Markets Miracle Makers for excellence in volunteerism and

contribution to community life. In 2008, the Women in Leadership Foundation recognized Brant as a youth Aboriginal Woman in Leadership. Since then she has been awarded the National Aboriginal Achievement Youth Award and been crowned Miss Indian World.

As she finishes her duties as Miss Indian World she sets her sights on applying to graduate school. She says of her future, "My hopes are to bring my education and my new perspective back to my community to work in a community development capacity. I want to be in the environment studies field as a reminder of the innovation of Indigenous people. I want to tell others to look back and focus on those ideas, and see how it is that we re-establish them as being part of environmental sustainability and innovation in the future."

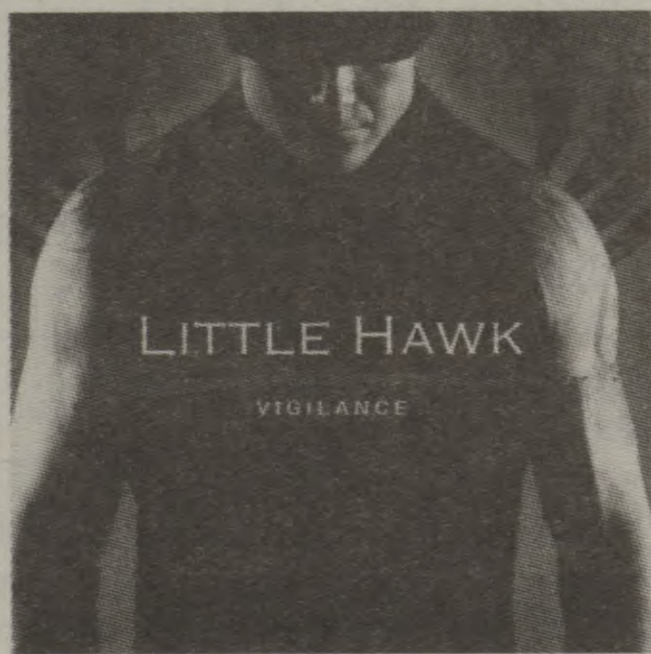
[radio's most active]

OUR PICK



Artist—Little Hawk
Song—Six Nations
Album—Vigilance
Label—Ojiji Music

Troy Westwood may be better known as one of Canadian Football League's more colorful kickers with 17 years in the CFL and playing with the Winnipeg Blues Bombers but thanks to his Aboriginal relations, he began his music career as one of the founders of Eagle & Hawk and then returned to music from football as Little Hawk. Troy has been adopted into the Aboriginal music industry and with the number of Aboriginal Music Awards under his belt is proving he's earned his way in this community.



Little Hawk delivers a delightfully pleasant album and he stays true to meeting an Aboriginal theme, including my favorite song, "Six Nations", which he does stripped down with just a hand drum and his voice. This approach he repeats on "Then They Came" in his most haunting but still soothing voice. Most of this album delivers solid songs stretching from rock to country, much of it flavored with the Aboriginal cultural sound and subject matter that fills his life. Little Hawk is a very likable southern rock-sounding artist whose singing is confident and expressive. Some songs are driven by what sounds like a traditional drum, as found on "\$13,000", keeping a heart-beat of which any Aboriginal person will instantly recognize.

It's clear the Aboriginal community won the game of hearts with Troy Westwood and Little Hawk is scoring touchdowns with his music that is winning him more hearts than kicking the pig skin ever did.

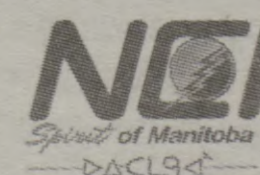
Reviewed by K. Kantan

Check out Our Pick on facebook

ABORIGINAL RADIO MOST ACTIVE LIST

ARTIST	TITLE	ALBUM
Cheri Maracle	One Last Time	Closer To Home
Marc Merilainen	Paivaa	The Wolves Of Tuonela
Alexander McKay Jr.	Trapper	Single Release
Yvonne St. Germaine	Tennessee Sky	Tennessee Sky
Angus Jourdain	Waiting	Single Release
Nathan Cunningham	Saturday Night Angel	Single Release
D'Aoust Brothers	Closer To Home	Single Release
Billy Simard	An Angel On My Mind	Single Release
Robbie Robertson f. E. Clapton	He Don't Live Here No More	How To Become Clairvoyant
Ghostkeeper	By Morning	Ghostkeeper
CerAmony	Shine Alive	CerAmony
Victoria Blackie	Don't Make Me Love You	Wanted Man
Dey & Nite	Walk It Out	Single Release
Rheanne Gagnon	Come And Get Me Guy	MB Star Attractions Talent Showcase
Crystal Shawanda	Fight For Me	Fight For Me
Kyla Cederwall	Little Red Chevy	Just Drive
Fargo Arizona	Call My Name	Single Release
Elisapie Isaac	Out Of Desperation	There Will Be Stars
Wayne Lavallee	Big Country	Trail Of Tears
Lukas Nelson & Promise Of The Real	Making A Case For Love	Lukas Nelson & Promise Of The Real

CONTRIBUTING STATIONS:



Windspeaker sports briefs

By Sam Laskaris

Shattler wins MVP

Jeff Shattler, a 26-year-old Ojibwe who grew up in Toronto, has been awarded the National Lacrosse League's most valuable player award. Shattler starred with the Calgary Roughnecks this season, averaging five points per game. He racked up 75 points (29 goals, 46 assists) in 15 regular season contests.

Shattler though was somewhat of a surprise winner for MVP award. That's because he had finished tied for 10th in league scoring. And Shattler admitted he wasn't really anticipating the MVP award since he had earlier been chosen as the NLL's top transition player of the year.

For Shattler, this marked the fifth season he played for the Roughnecks. He had broken into the NLL during the 2006 season when he played just one game with the Buffalo Bandits.

Shattler was one of the main reasons the Roughnecks posted the best regular season record, 11-5, in the league this year.

The Roughnecks, however, were upset 10-8 by the Washington Stealth in the West Division final.

Washington was then edged 8-7 by the host Toronto Rock in the NLL championship match held May 15.

After his NLL season was over, Shattler joined the Iroquois Nationals, who competed at the world box lacrosse championships in Prague.

Shattler and his teammates captured silver medals at the world tournament, which was won by Canada.

Shattler, who recently bought a home in Calgary, is now spending his spring/summer toiling for the Victoria Shamrocks, members of the Western Lacrosse Association.

Funding awarded

The Kwanlin Dun First Nation is one of the latest recipients of the Yukon's Community Development Fund (CDF). An announcement was made in early June that the Aboriginal community will receive \$100,000 to plan and develop a sustainable, broad-based, culturally appropriate community recreation program.

The Kwanlin Dun First Nation was one of eight recipients in the latest round of funding, which saw a total of \$1.2 million awarded to provide social and economic benefits to Yukon residents.

The CDF has three levels of funding.

The most recent recipients had all applied for Tier 3 level funding, which is a request for more than \$75,000.

The CDF also offers Tier 1 level funding for those seeking up to \$20,000 for a project. And Tier 2 funding is available for those applying for a request between \$20,000 and \$75,000.

Four Ontario teams

As in most previous years of the National Aboriginal Hockey Championships, Ontario is planning to have four of its teams compete at the 2012 tournament in Saskatoon.

A traditional power at the national event, Ontario only sent one squad, a boys' entry, to this year's tournament, which was also staged in Saskatoon.

That team ended up winning a bronze medal at the event which was held in late April. Ontario doubled Manitoba 6-3 in its bronze-medal contest.

Saskatchewan won the gold medal in the boys' category while Quebec-based Eastern Door and the North took the silver.

An Ontario girls' team did not compete this year due to a lack of funding and the fact that support staff was not in place.

Having just one Ontario team take part was a bit unusual. That's because the province traditionally sent four clubs—Ontario South and Ontario North female and male teams—to the national tournament, which has been held annually since 2001.

There had been some uncertainty whether a national tournament would even be held this year. It was in mid-January before the Saskatoon Tribal Council, which was keen to host the 2012 event, agreed to also stage this year's tourney.

Due to the relatively late announcement, some previous tournament participants felt they did not have sufficient time to prepare entries for this year.

Ontario officials are already working towards the 2012 tournament. They are currently seeking coaches, managers and trainers for all four of their planned teams for next year.

Moncton race

A half marathon and five-kilometre walk/run will be held in Moncton on July 10. The event is part of IndigenACTION, which was launched last summer to enhance support for Aboriginal athletes and promote health, fitness and wellness in First Nation communities across the country. IndigenACTION was created by the Assembly of First Nations Youth Council.

The Moncton race will be staged at Tidal Bore Park. The registration fee is \$50 for those entering the half marathon (21.1 kilometre) race. And there's a \$25 entry fee for those who wish to enter the 5K walk/run. All participants who register before June 30 will receive a free T-shirt.

[sports]

Three years of hard work begins for NAIG hosts



The team from Eastern Door marches in the opening ceremonies at the 2008 Cowichan NAIG. PHOTO: FILE

By Sam Laskaris
Windspeaker Contributor

REGINA

Officials from Regina and Saskatchewan are in a celebratory mood.

But they also realize they have three years of hard work ahead of them as they prepare to host the 2014 North American Indigenous Games (NAIG).

The NAIG Council awarded Regina the multi-sports competition after final bid presentations were made in mid-May in Moncton.

Two other cities—Halifax and London, Ont.—had also submitted bids to host the continent's showcase competition for Aboriginal athletes.

Each city that was keen to host the 2014 NAIG had to undergo a three-step stage.

For starters, cities had to submit a bid book last October. Then, they were allowed to showcase their city and plans during site evaluations, which were conducted in March. The concluding step was the presentations held in Moncton.

"In each of the three phases, I think we had the highest score," said Courage Bear, the chair of the Regina bid.

Besides city officials, the Regina bid also included the backings of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN), Métis Nation—Saskatchewan and the provincial government.

Ken Cheveldayoff, the minister of First Nations and Métis Relations, had been kept informed of the Regina bid from the start. And he was among those who represented the Regina entry during its final bid presentation in Moncton.

As a result, he wasn't the least bit surprised when Regina was awarded the NAIG.

"We knew we had a strong proposal and we had a strong team," he said.

This actually marked the third

time Regina had submitted a bid to host the NAIG.

The city was originally keen to stage the 2008 games. But that event was held in Cowichan, B.C.

Regina had also vied to host the 2011 NAIG, which was awarded to the Wisconsin city of Milwaukee. But this year's games were cancelled last summer when Milwaukee pulled out as host and a replacement site could not be found.

Bear said the Regina group this time around did not feel the NAIG Council would grant it the games simply based on the fact it had tried twice before to land the prestigious competition.

"We took nothing for granted," he said. "Our attitude was 'be prepared and work hard'."

Despite its previous two setbacks at hosting the NAIG, FSIN Vice Chief Morley Watson felt it was rather important for Regina to try once again.

"We believe in all of our young people and sport is a builder of character," he said.

Saskatchewan will have a maximum of 500 participants at the 2014 NAIG.

In total, the competition will be capped at 5,000 participants, which besides athletes also includes coaches, managers and support staff.

Organizers are anticipating 10,000 people, however, will converge on Regina as many family members and friends will travel to the NAIG.

The games are expected to feature 15 sports. The athletes taking part will range in age from 15 to 19.

Though the competition will be staged during two weeks during the summer of '14, exact dates have not been announced yet.

One thing that is known though is that it will cost about \$10.5 million to stage the games.

The Saskatchewan government and the federal government will provide \$3.5 million each in funding. Plus, an additional \$1 million will be forthcoming from



Courage Bear, the chair of the Regina bid. PHOTO: FILE

the city of Regina.

Organizers also anticipate bringing in about \$800,000 in registration fees.

"That's almost \$9 million we'll have without even going after corporate funding," Bear said. "We'll work hard though to make sure we have everything in place."

Another thing that is known is that the First Nations University of Canada will play a vital role for the NAIG. The Regina-based university is expected to house the athletes village as well as the media centre. The school will also be the site of many of the cultural components of the games.

Another school, the University of Regina, will also be a hub of activity. It will be one of the main venues where several sports are expected to be staged.

It is believed that the majority of the NAIG sports will be contested in Regina. Organizers though believe that rifle shooting and archery will be held outside the city's limits.

Bear said that in the coming months some of the priorities include establishing a host society. That group will have to also become incorporated and then begin its work on its business plan.

Once 2014 does roll around, Bear estimates the economic benefits to Regina from the games will probably be between \$20 million to \$25 million.

Continued underfunding of education just 'dumb'

By Shari Narine
Windspeaker Contributor

TORONTO

It is not only "immoral" but "stupid economically" for the federal government to continue to underfund the education of the fastest growing, youngest segment of the Canadian population.

"(It's) as dumb as anything.... These are the people on who we are going to build a nation and we're not going to educate them? It's just beyond belief," said former Liberal Prime Minister Paul Martin.

Since leaving office in 2006, Martin has thrown his energy and financial commitment behind organizations that support Aboriginal youth and entrepreneurs. Martin believes that while universities and post-secondary institutions have made giant steps to advance the educational opportunities they offer Aboriginal students, early education, elementary and secondary schools, whether on or off reserve, have not made the same strides. To that end, Martin and his family started the Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative (MAEI), which has as its focus not only education but also entrepreneurial opportunities.

The Capital for Aboriginal Prosperity and Entrepreneurship Fund offers investment dollars to Aboriginal graduates who want to explore business opportunities. The investment fund contains \$50 million that Martin raised from 20 Canadian companies.

The education portion of MAEI includes two different pilot projects in schools across the country. In two on-reserve schools in southwestern Ontario, one pilot project focuses its energy on literacy in one school and numeracy in the other to make it possible for students from those schools to transfer to any school and be on par with their same-grade counterparts.

The second pilot project involves nine schools across the country and instills the value of education on the students in attaining better jobs. The young entrepreneurship program teaches the students the necessary skills to be in business and encourages them to go on to post-secondary education and further their skills and opportunity to make a good living.

MAEI also runs an accounting mentorship program with accounting firms working with students who have shown an interest in numbers. A Web site, another MAEI project, allows teachers to offer best practices, guidance that is not readily accessible for isolated northern reserve teachers.

Martin is particularly proud of

the MAEI's latest accomplishment: the development of its own textbooks. Instead of using textbooks adapted to meet First Nations' needs, two teachers spent a year writing the high school textbook.

"We've written what we believe to be the first textbooks on how to do business by Aboriginals for Aboriginals anywhere in the world," said Martin.

Martin approaches his partnership with on-reserve schools the same way his government dealt with First Nations and other Aboriginal peoples.

"We don't go anywhere unless a chief and band, education director and principals of a school say that want us," said Martin.

It was the Liberal government, led by Martin between 2003 and 2006, that did the ground work and began discussions for the apology that was delivered in 2008 by Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

But the Kelowna Accord, the second part of Martin's two-prong approach to addressing Aboriginal concerns, was scuttled by the Conservatives.

The Kelowna Accord, which had its share of critics, set out \$5 billion to be spent over five years on priorities identified by the Aboriginal leaders, and included education, health care, water, housing and accountability. The amount to be set aside for the next five years was to be discussed later.

Martin and his government, along with premiers and territorial leaders, met with the national chief of the Assembly of First Nations and heads of the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and Metis to discuss issues of concerns.

"(The Aboriginal leaders) were going to set the issues to be discussed," said Martin. "I said, 'You make the demands and then we'll negotiate how to achieve them.'"

But the Kelowna Accord died when Harper took over.

Martin finds some consolation in the fact that prior to the last federal election Harper issued an invitation to the AFN, opening the doors to a First Nations-Crown gathering.

Martin also finds hope in the fact that at least 30 Aboriginal people sought seats in the May federal election with seven successfully taking their place in Ottawa.

"I have maintained from the very beginning that while I believe very much in self-government, there's nothing in self-government that precludes Aboriginals from running as MPs," said Martin. He noted that sometimes it is easier to bring about changes when working from within. "I'd love

to get people elected who would be on my side."

Martin's passion for justice and his commitment to Aboriginal people are values he has carried since he was a teenager. Working in the northern parts of Ontario in the summer of his high school years, Martin became aware that

kids his age didn't have the same educational opportunities as he did.

When he became prime minister, his religious ceremony was a smudging. Now, as he talks in Africa about Canadian values, it gives him pause to reflect further.

"I say to myself, 'How can you be talking about Canadian values when there are reserves where the tragedy is every bit as great as anything you're going to see in a small community in Africa?' Yet we as a very rich country are allowing that to happen," said Martin.

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Next step in health governance

(Continued from page 14.)

"I certainly support our chiefs and our nations in moving forward and making decisions for themselves," agreed regional chief of the BC Assembly of First Nations Jody Wilson Raybould.

"I see the work of the Health Council and Society as being something enormous," she said. However, the [vote] doesn't mean the work is done. Having passed this resolution is not going to solve all the problems, but it is a start," she continued. "It's significant in terms of change and the way we approach things and work collectively," she said, adding that First Nations community members throughout BC must be informed of the details regarding the resolution so as to have greater input as the process unfolds.

"Every single person in the community will have a chance to have their input [and] you can't ask for better consultation, communication and accountability than that," added James Wilson, a member of the Vancouver Island Regional Health Council and co-founder of the Inter Tribal Health Authority. "We're fully engaged and supporting the process and we're developing a system in which every community is going to have input," he promised.

Michael Hilson of Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health says the federal government backs the resolution. "Health Canada fully supports it," he added.

But while the framework will provide BC First Nations with control over health care decisions, it won't mean the severing of government ties completely.

"It isn't like we're going to do it on our own," Atleo ensures. "There are partnership agreements that are going to be created between the federal government and us and the provincial government and us," he added.

Although funding agreements with the government will be made, Chief Bob Chamberlin of Kwikwaka'wakw-Ah-Kwaw-Ah-Mish First Nation (Gilford Island) has concerns. While in favor of the resolution, he called on the provincial government to ensure funding be allocated to needed resources, adding that the province needs to realize that more money is needed for the future work of First Nations community healthcare hubs.

"I'm assuming that we're going to be putting another layer of responsibility and tasks on the convenient hubs that are waiting," he said. "There needs to be adequate funding for hubs, province-wide," he stressed. "Everybody in the room knows damn well that the dollars and resources that we have for health needs are horribly inadequate. We also know that the policies, procedures and programs do not meet the needs of our people. What the status quo is today is not good enough," he concluded.

Of the 167 chiefs and dignitaries at the forum, 146 voted in favour of the resolution [87 per cent]. Of those who voted against, most said that they support the self-governance principle overall but had reservations regarding the lack of information about the future process and framework implementation.

"It's the province I don't trust [and] it's Canada I don't trust," said Chief Michael LeBourdais of the Whispering Pine/Clinton First Nation in the Shuswap.

"The devil is in the details [and] it's those details I need to know about," he said, adding that he voted against the resolution as it stood.

But Atleo said the details will come later.

"This is not about us knowing what that health authority is going to look like," he said. "The framework clearly states that we are going to go in the direction of the people," he said.

However, while some publicly

embraced the resolution, other's understood community apprehension regarding the change.

"There is a lot of anxiety and fear of change and a fear of independence," said Chief John Frank of the Ahousaht First Nation.

"[But] we've lost control of our fishing industry, we've lost control of our forestry and everything that's coming into our territory, so this is a new beginning for us on how we can pick up independence this way, in our healthcare, which is really important," he explained, adding that he was in agreement with the resolution.

Calling the existing framework for First Nations healthcare "inhuman," Frank said changes must be made.

"They don't care that my Elders can't afford to buy glasses, they don't care that my Elders can't buy their dentures, that's really inhuman and I think that if we had this in our hands we'd try to figure out how can we help our Elders and how we can help our people make it right for them. And that's what it's all about," he said.

"It's going to take time to get to where we need to be," he added. "But we've got to start somewhere."

The resolution is a 10-year framework agreement. The FNHC has been directed to develop a work plan in consultation with regional caucuses which is to be presented back to the caucuses for review no later than Sept. 1.

The regional caucuses are expected to provide feedback by Dec. 2.

The FNHC has been directed to continue sharing information, engaging with and being accountable to their respective regional First Nations communities.

To get more information on the First Nations Health Council and to view the resolution, go to www.fnch.ca

Nations take issue

(Continued from page 17.)

The Site C project requires environmental certification and other permits and approvals before it can proceed to construction.

As well as consultation issues, environmental damage is also a concern to First Nations and environmentalists groups. While BC Hydro is branding the project as being a clean and renewable energy source, those who oppose the plan say it will be anything but clean.

"There is a whole array of environmental damage related to Site C," said George Heyman, executive director of Sierra Club BC, a non-profit environmental organization whose mission it is to protect British Columbia's many varied animal species and ecosystems.

"In the absence of a comprehensive analysis of all potential clean energy sources in B.C. with a focus on the lowest possible environmental footprint, we believe it's wrong [of BC Hydro] to proceed with a massive project, especially over the objections of First Nations and other local residents," said Heyman.

"Much of the power from Site C is likely destined for new mining projects and the shale-gas extraction industry in northeast BC, an industry whose environmental risks, including fresh water overuse and contamination, are under growing scrutiny in BC and other jurisdictions," he added. "Site C would flood 20 per cent of prime farmland in the Peace River Valley as British Columbians grow increasingly concerned about our future food security," he explained.

"It's the fragmentation of the land," added Willson, who says environmental impacts of damming the Peace River will substantially affect grizzly bear migration and challenge various wildlife that use the lush region for nesting and birthing.

Willson says his community will continue to fight this plan but admits he feels his hands are tied.

"The provincial government has determined that they want it. BC Hydro has determined they want it... It's rubber stamped," he said.

Meanwhile the province and BC Hydro insist talks will

continue with First Nation groups.

Rich Coleman, BC Minister of Energy and Mines was unavailable for an interview but in a ministry spokesperson said the consultation process concerning Site C is not over.

"Now that the Site C project is proceeding to the environmental assessment and regulatory review stage, BC Hydro engagement with First Nations will continue, with a greater focus on impact assessment, mitigation and accommodation," the spokesperson stated.

"Government consultation with First Nations will take place through the environmental assessment and regulatory process. BC Hydro has recently submitted an updated project description to the EAO and Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency."

With the submission of the updated project description, the formal EA [environmental assessment] process can soon be initiated. The ministry understands that the BC Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) will soon be inviting potentially affected First Nations to participate in the EA process, including the technical working group, and will have opportunities to advise the EAO on how the updated project potentially affects their interests and treaty rights.

"Consultation is an ongoing process," Conway assured. "We will continue to consult Aboriginal groups through stage 3," he promised.

Despite consultation promises, Treaty 8 First Nations leaders remain sceptical.

"It's going to be the same," Willson said regarding the lack of meaningful consultation. "And at the end of the day they will say everything is fine. It's a joke."

The Treaty 8 First Nations have taken their concerns to the United Nations, asking them to intervene on their behalf and urging them to remind Canadian governments of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, which Canada has endorsed.

For more information on BC Hydro Site C plan, go to www.bchydro.com

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[footprints] Lillian Pitawanakwat Thunderbird Eagle Woman flies home

By Dianne Meili

"I will be here in the West doorway, that is where I am today. I am that Thunder in the sky, I am the cleansing when you cry."

Before her death on Jan. 4, 2011, Lillian Pitawanakwat, Thunderbird Eagle Woman (Ninkii BinessMijissi Kwe) of the Thunderbird clan, wrote out comforting words for those left behind.

Cyndy Vanier, who delivered Lillian's eulogy, said the Elder gave her notes before she passed away, and "these are probably the things she'd want you to know if she were able to speak them to us today."

The words reassured loved ones that Lillian thought of death as "just a stepping stone" and that she would never really leave them alone and was only "a breath away."

"She didn't want people crying for her because she wasn't afraid of death and she knew people would carry on with her work, because she'd taught them well," said Vera Wabegijig, who attended many of the ceremonies Lillian carried out for people.

The Elder devoted her life to renewing Ojibwe traditions and was a fluent speaker of her language. She was born into the Whitefish River First Nation in Ontario in 1944, and was the last of 12 children born to Moses, of the Potawatomi Nation, and Margaret Pitawanakwat, an Ojibway.

In a biography Lillian wrote several years ago, she stated "I'm the second-last to be delivered by my grandmother, who was the midwife of our community. She delivered many children into the fullness of life and she was the one who greeted me when I came into the world. She named me Granddaughter of Thunder Woman. She's been in the spirit world for a long time. And yet she's so very present for me,

because she is my guide, my teacher. When I ask her things to this day, she answers me."

Lillian noted her grandmother gave birth to 18 children and "of those 18, only my mother and uncle survived. The others succumbed to the great illness that beset us in the early 1900's. And so my mother lost all of her siblings except for one. She carried that grief all her life – the grief of losing a family."

According to Lillian, her father's Potawatomi people were known as the fire-keepers. She took on the task of nurturing the fires of the people she came in contact with. Her spiritual work took her across the country as she led sweatlodges, fasting ceremonies at Dreamers Rock, and other gatherings for people. Her first concern was women and she worked tirelessly to counsel them and nurture their success.

"I first met her at a youth and Elders gathering at Trent University in Peterborough in 1993," recalled Wabegijig.

"I was so impressed with what she had to say that I approached her after her talk. I wanted to give her something but all I had was a poem I'd written, so I gave her that."

Wabegijig said the Elder enveloped her in a huge hug and asked later if she could read the poem at the closing ceremonies.

"I said 'yes' and after that, everything changed for me. I knew I wanted to keep writing and produce pieces that would have an impact on my community. Lillian gave me that start. Hearing her read my work that day felt amazing. I've never stopped writing poetry since."

Lillian's many followers describe her as an intuitive, extremely giving Elder.

"I think she knew very well what she was doing when she asked to read my poem to the

audience," Wabegijig said. "She probably looked ahead and could see my future in the performing arts. I just needed a hand up."

Lillian shared her traditional knowledge with numerous local, regional and national leaders, guiding them on social and political issues, and was also a founding member of countless projects, such as Minwaashin Lodge, a facility for Aboriginal women who have been victims of violence or suffering the effects of the residential school system.

As a member of the Elders Council of United Chiefs and Councils of Mnidoo Mnising, she provided valuable teachings related to ceremonies, language and culture, and took the time to write out the teachings of the medicine wheel and create lesson plans about the four directions for youth in grades 7 to 9.

Lillian wanted to ensure young women received traditional teachings and so she oversaw initiation rites for them. In the Strawberry Ceremony, girls are prohibited from eating the berries for a year, and they avoid contact with males except for their father, brothers and cousins. Also during that year, they are taught how to behave properly, sew, cook and look after their homes. At the end of the ceremony, a feast is given and the young woman is informed of the gifts her family members and friends see in her, and she is repeatedly told that she is loved.

"Lillian had a huge heart, and she was so beautiful and calm. She made a difference in everyone's life," said Wabegijig. "She welcomed you into her home and her life and if you came to know her it was like she was your mother. It was like losing a mother when she died because suddenly, there was no one to listen to your problems and guide you like she did."



PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Lillian Pitawanakwat, Thunderbird Eagle Woman (Ninkii BinessMijissi Kwe)

"She's also responsible for gifting so many people in the Sudbury, North Bay, Ottawa and Toronto areas – and likely beyond – with their Ojibway names," Wabegijig added.

She was generous with her time, spirit, and possessed

unconditional love for people. That's why everyone wanted to be with her," said Cyndy Vanier.

"And everyone remembers her always saying 'bon ma pii' which means 'love you lots' when she said goodbye to you."

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[footprints] Sophie Thomas

By Dianne Meilli
 Traditional healer offered help when doctors said 'no' "You've brought me to heaven." That's all the late Sophie Thomas could say when her daughter Minnie Thomas drove her to Tamarack Lake near Skookumchuk, B.C. years ago. "She looked around and she..."

Windspeaker News Briefs - May

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By Shari Narine, Windspeaker Correspondent
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Innovative approach to oil, gas development

By Shari Narine, Sweetgrass Writer, Edmonton
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Calgary Briefs - April

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