



pathways

SYNCRUDE CANADA LTD. ABORIGINAL REVIEW 2010

A Day on the Delta

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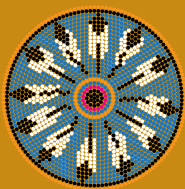
Welcome

There are many different pathways to success. It could be learning to play a musical instrument. Or studying for a college diploma or university degree. Sometimes it can be nurturing a young imagination simply by reading a bedtime story.

Through *Pathways*, Syncrude's 2010 Aboriginal Review, we're exploring many inspiring and diverse accomplishments. Indeed, there is no end to the remarkable stories of success and achievement among Aboriginal people. So much so that this year we have refreshed the book to make room for more of the stories that really matter—stories about people making positive contributions in their communities, and stories about groups bringing new perspectives to the table and influencing change in our society.

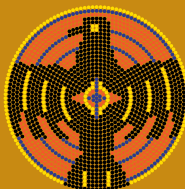
Join us as we explore these many diverse pathways and learn how generations young and old are working to make a difference.

The stories in *Pathways* reflect the six key commitment areas that are the focus of Syncrude's Aboriginal Relations program: Corporate Leadership, Employment, Business Development, Education and Training, Community Development and the Environment. As a representation of our ongoing commitment to work with Aboriginal people to create and share opportunity, *Pathways* is one of many initiatives meant to foster dialogue and celebrate shared achievements.



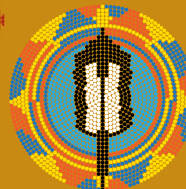
COMMUNITY

Canada is a country rich in diversity and culture. Syncrude is committed to helping Aboriginal communities celebrate success and continue to build capacity for further progress and achievement.



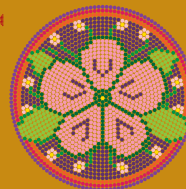
LEADERSHIP

Leadership is found among young and old alike. As a member of many regional and national organizations, Syncrude works with business and governments to champion the continued advancement of Aboriginal people across the country.



EMPLOYMENT

As one of the largest employers of Aboriginal people in Canada, Syncrude creates opportunities that enable Aboriginal people to fully participate in all aspects of our operation.



ENVIRONMENT

We are committed to working with local Aboriginal advisors on such matters as end-land use and minimizing the long-term impacts of our operations on traditional land uses.



BUSINESS

Wood Buffalo is home to some of the most successful Aboriginal businesses in Canada. Syncrude works closely with Aboriginal business owners to identify opportunities for supplying goods and services to our operation.



EDUCATION

Learning unlocks the door to reward and personal growth. Syncrude is committed to working with Aboriginal communities to explore and create diverse educational opportunities.

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Insight Exploring stories of fearlessness, heart, hope and discovery. PAGE 16

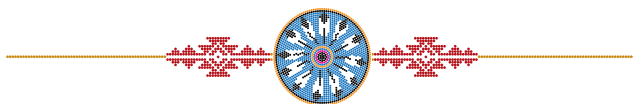


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A Day on the

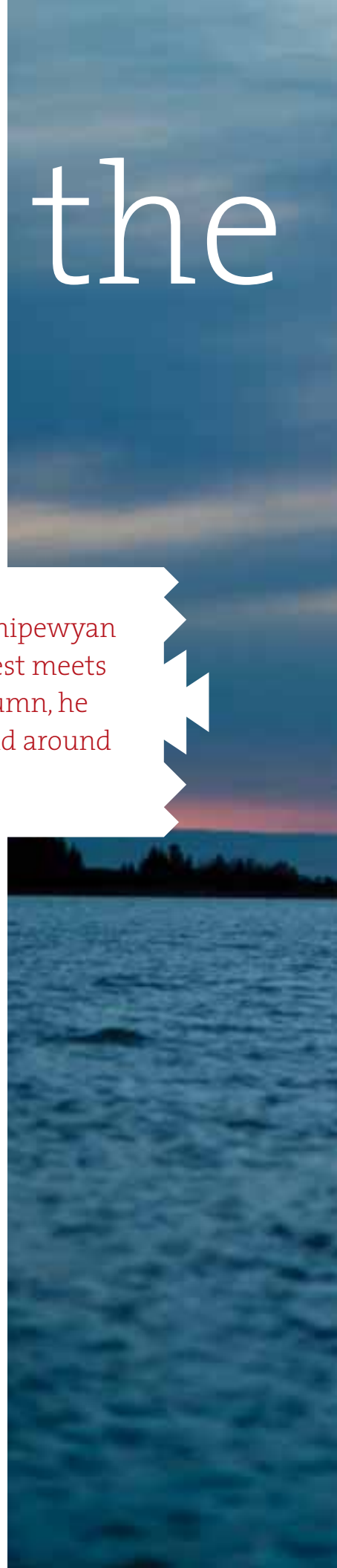
6 a.m. As the sun lazily stretches above the battleship grey waters of Lake Athabasca, the shrill chattering of ravens pierces the stillness. But Johnny Courtoreille's wizened ears have detected faint honking much farther away. "The Canada geese must be getting ready to leave from the lake," he says. "It's early this year. We might be in for a long, tough winter."

Johnny Courtoreille has lived most of his 75 years in Fort Chipewyan and the surrounding wilderness, an area where boreal forest meets the Athabasca Delta and the Canadian Shield. In early autumn, he invited us to spend a day with him, documenting life in and around the largest inland freshwater delta in the world.

Not that a fierce winter bothers the 75-year-old Mikisew Cree Elder, who spent more than 60 years carving out a life off the land in the Athabasca Delta, including over 20 years as a warden with Parks Canada. "I have a house in Fort Chipewyan but I'm a bush man," Johnny says. "You couldn't get me out of there in my younger days."

9 a.m. After lingering over a long coffee with another Elder, reminiscing about the good old days when muskrats were abundant, a dozen leg-hold traps cost \$12 and young people all spoke fluent Cree, Johnny languidly backs his boat trailer down one of Fort Chipewyan's two boat launches and neatly deposits it in the water. Like Johnny, the boat is weathered but lively as it jets across Lake Athabasca, passing St. Paul's Parish, which he once helped paint with a lacquer based on berries and fish oil, and an imposing three-storey brick house that used to serve as the priest's rectory.

Neither the convent nor the Holy Angels Residential School, where Johnny lived for 10 months a year while classes were in, remain standing. Johnny, however, is less concerned about what's disappeared on the land than from the lake. "Do you see all those rocks and willows below the fence? In the '50s, that



Delta

A full-page photograph of a person in a small boat on Lake Athabasca at sunset. The person is silhouetted against the bright orange and yellow glow of the sun sinking below the horizon. The sky is filled with soft, wispy clouds in shades of blue, purple, and pink. The water in the foreground is dark blue with gentle ripples. The background shows a dark silhouette of a forested shoreline.

Johnny Courtoreille watches as the sun slowly
sinks below the Athabasca Delta from his boat
on Lake Athabasca.



Johnny rests in the cabin he recently built east of Lake Mamawi. A radio can pick up stations from Fort McMurray but wildlife provide the real entertainment.

“Whenever there is bison around, it is easy to spot wolves. I saw a pack of 24 during the winter. They were prowling back and forth in front of my picture window.”





was all covered with water. The church actually had its own dock where they brought in barges with supplies," he says, pointing along the shoreline to well-scrubbed pinkish rock exposed by the receding water level. "The lake has dropped about 10 to 15 feet over the years. It was really noticeable in the late 1960s."

2 p.m. Johnny putters about in his cabin in the delta, just east of Lake Mamawi, near a traditional gathering place for the Mikisew Cree. The two-by-fours are nailed together solidly, and no small amount of invention has been used to fashion them into roof trusses. "We were taught a lot in the missions, even wiring up

homes," Johnny says with a wry smile. The carpentry stuck even if the Catholicism didn't. "I believe in God, not church. I did learn a lot about building in residential school though."

A Coleman camp stove helps prepare meals. A radio whose antenna is run by a wire to sit atop a 15-foot pole can pick up FM signals from as far away as Fort McMurray some 280 kilometres away. But the real entertainment for Johnny comes in the form of passing wildlife. "Whenever there is bison around, it is easy to spot wolves. I saw a pack of 24 at once during the winter. They were prowling back and forth in front of my picture window at my cabin in Wood Buffalo National Park."



Even though low fur prices have ended trapping, Johnny believes Fort Chipewyan will continue to live on, thanks to the natural environment available to its people.



The delta started to form about 10,000 years ago. Today, it extends over 3,800 square kilometres and is one of the major waterfowl nesting areas in North America.

6 p.m. With the autumn sun slowly receding into the western sky, Johnny deftly navigates his boat into the shallow waters of Lake Mamawi. The lower water levels would pose a serious hazard for less experienced pilots, but Johnny doesn't need a GPS to read the lake where he has spent most of his life. The lowered waters have also seen the disappearance of muskrats, the staple for trappers in the 1950s and 1960s. "Muskrats were easy to kill in my younger days," he says. "I'd like to know why they have died off. I don't know what's behind it. I'm not a scientist."

8 p.m. Back in Fort Chipewyan, Johnny watches as children frolic outside in a cool fall evening, trying to squeeze out some final moments of unrestrained freedom before school starts. There are no parents hovering over them as they play together, something that hasn't changed since Johnny's day. But driving slowly through the streets, where as many satellite dishes as dreamcatchers adorn houses, Johnny sees a much different future for this generation.

"Fort Chip will be here after I'm gone. I'm the last of the trappers. All the good ones have already gone," he says. "These kids must go to school, finish their grades and get nice jobs. Today, you cannot make a living off the land anymore. Prices for furs are not strong and the costs are too high."

But this ancient community carved into the craggy Canadian Shield on Lake Athabasca's north shore will need help to preserve itself. "We must work together with oil companies to protect what we have up here. If you love the outdoors, there's no better place to live on Earth."

"We must work together with oil companies to protect what we have up here. If you love the outdoors, there's no better place to live on Earth."



The Aboriginal Drumming program at Dr. Clark School provides extracurricular learning for students like Stefani Vermillion (this page) and Robyn Welshman and Katie Herron (opposite, left to right).



The Beat of a New Generation

As the steady beat of the drums reverberates down the hallways and through the corridors of Dr. Clark School, it beckons all who hear it to pause and appreciate the beauty of its presence.

For the young drummers, this isn't just another extracurricular club, it's a living link to an ancestral way of life. Yet each of the 12 drummers experiences drumming differently.

"I wanted to be in the drumming group because it makes me feel happy, and it's like there are spirits around me," says 11-year-old Natasha. "When I play the drum, I think about my mom, who passed away in 2006."

The reasons the 12 children in grades 3 to 7 commit to weekly drumming sessions and to sharing the drum in other schools and communities are as diverse as the group itself.

"We wanted our drumming group to be culturally mixed because in this school alone, students represent 54 countries," says Eileen Lucas, organizer and instructor of the drumming group and member of the Qalipu Mi'Kmaq First Nation. "This gives the children an opportunity to work together in an inclusive school community and build confidence and self-esteem while also enhancing the Aboriginal content in the curriculum."

The group, which was also established with the assistance of Native Family School liaison worker Hazel Derange, now has 30 drums thanks to support from donors such as Syncrude. Eileen says this enables the group to take the drums into classrooms, where each child has the opportunity to share in the drumming experience.



What are Aboriginal Drums?

- Drums are considered to be a gift from Mother Earth and not a toy or musical instrument.
- Drums are a sacred item.
- Drumming is believed to be one of the quickest ways to connect to the Creator.
- Drums were often used to communicate feasting, fasting, healing, successful hunts, war time or journeys into the spirit world.
- Aboriginal people feel proud and honoured to carry and care for drums.
- Drums don't belong to an individual; although it is believed spirits speak to the person who is playing the drum.
- A drum carrier is expected to pass on his or her knowledge and teachings to others as a way to preserve the culture.

Source: Eileen Lucas

Sonny Flett ensures employees in Syncrude's Fort Chipewyan Rotational Employment Program get to and from the aircraft that transports them to Fort McMurray and the work site.

A Clear Line of Sight

As a young boy, Sonny Flett took a Hudson's Bay steamer from Fort Chipewyan to Fort Fitzgerald with his mother, a journey that remains etched in his mind more than six decades later.

"They used to have 11 boats going up and down the rivers around here," recalls the 76-year-old Métis Elder. "When we took the Echo up the Slave River, the deckhands told me it burned one cord of wood every hour. It towed barges with cows, chickens and pigs that they would slaughter in order to have enough fresh meat for the voyage."

Sonny's reminiscing isn't mere pining for a simpler, sepia-toned era. It's a memory with a purposeful eye on the future. One of two representatives from Fort Chipewyan on the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Council, Sonny sees the potential of using boats to help connect Alberta's oldest settlement with career opportunities as the oil sands edge northward.

"I would like to see an all-weather road built from Fort Chip to Fort Smith," says Sonny, who began serving his fourth term on Wood Buffalo's municipal council in October 2010. "Then we could use a ferry to cross the Slave River."



Sonny Flett

As one of Syncrude's longest-standing contractors—providing transportation services for the Fort Chipewyan Rotational Employment Program since 1982—Sonny has seen the positive impact industry has had on his community.

"We cannot go back to the way things were. Our younger generations are not going to be hunters and trappers," he says. "We can't stop industry, so we need to work with them. At the same time, industry must listen to Aboriginal people. Proper consultation is very important."

Even with the completion of the Archie Simpson Arena and Syncrude Youth Centre, Sonny sees more work to be done in his community. "Construction is just about finished on the new nurses' station, and they've poured the foundation for the new Keyano College campus in Chip," he says. "Now we need to tackle a swimming pool for the community. We've just finished a feasibility study that goes to the municipality's council for approval. There is plenty to be done and I'm ready to do it."



Project engineer Deanna Adams has enjoyed the diverse opportunities provided by a career with Syncrude.

All the Right Moves



Deanna Adams

Guns N' Roses and Bon Jovi may have rocked her world back then, but it was the allure of a career as an engineer that actually altered Deanna Adams's life.

"A lady from Syncrude came and gave a talk when I was in school, and that's really what decided it for me," says Deanna, a project engineer with Syncrude and a Mikisew Cree First Nation band member. "There weren't many female engineers at that time, but I loved math and science, and with the support of my parents, it just seemed like that would be my path."

The mother of three has been with Syncrude 11 years. She says the daily challenges of working on complex projects such as the Base Mine North Dam project have kept her career fulfilling, and she feels her post-secondary education was invaluable in helping achieve this.

"One thing that I've learned is that a post-secondary education is very important to an individual starting their career," says

Deanna. "The choice is yours whether or not you choose to continue working in a field related to your post-secondary education, but many more opportunities are available to you. I have had the opportunity to experience many different positions throughout Syncrude. Although not all of them were related to my degree, they were very interesting. The opportunities are endless once you have a post-secondary education in your back pocket."

And just as her education served Deanna well, the early influence of rebellious rock bands has apparently stuck with her. "I just bought myself my first motorcycle, and let me tell you, that has been fun," she says.

A good education (and a motorcycle) will undoubtedly take Deanna anywhere she wants to go.

What was your favourite place to be when you were 10 years old?

My parents' cabin in Anzac. I spent many weekends exploring in the bush, trekking through the trails and helping out around the acreage. I learned many things, such as starting campfires, chopping wood, shooting guns, work ethics, a love for the outdoors and the ability to be comfortable alone in the bush miles from home and walk back after I've broken down or got myself stuck in a mud hole.

If you could spend a week anywhere on the planet with someone special, who would you take and where would you go? I would most definitely spend



it with my father, who passed away five years ago. I would probably choose to be in Anzac at our family's acreage, where we enjoyed spending lots of time together. He is my biggest influence and my role model. I would spend the week listening to all the things and stories that he had told me about himself previously but I didn't always have the time to listen. This would be my second chance.

What was your favourite song when you were 16? I believe my favourite song was Guns N' Roses' "Sweet Child of Mine" or Bon Jovi's "Lay Your Hands on Me."



"I like making people happy, and a good meal always brings people together," says Fort McKay caterer Rose Bouchier.

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner

Cooking remains a labour of love for Rose Bouchier, who sees her attitude in the kitchen as important as sourcing the freshest vegetables from the Athabasca Hutterite Colony or the choicest cuts of meat from moose hunted near Moose Lake.

"You need to love what you do so you do it with care," says Rose, who operates Bouchier Dene Catering. "The ingredients are important but so is your attitude."

Rose learned to cook traditional Dene cuisine by watching her aunt prepare bannock for family gatherings.

"You need to love what you do
so you do it with care"

"I was in my 20s when I started to learn to cook because I was in residential school as a child and teenager. When Aunt Viola cooked the family meals, I would watch. If I had questions, I'd ask her," Rose recalls. "She was a very loving and caring lady. She gave from her heart. My mother was the same way. If people are hungry, feed them. My father also taught me to make dry fish and dry meat."

While Rose has shared her Dene cuisine with luminaries as famous as David Suzuki, she gets as much pleasure from preparing meals for the Elders of Fort McKay.

"Most of the Elders enjoy my cooking because I know the foods they like and how they like it prepared, whether it is beef tongue, fried pickerel or roast bison," she says. "I don't cook with salt and pepper. And I always make sure there are salads for the vegetarians."

While her catering business has three part-time employees who help set up and clean up, only Rose works over the stove. And she is happy with that.

"I like making people happy, and a good meal always brings people together," she says. "Whether I cater a business meeting or a social gathering, I know a good meal helps set the pace for them. If they are enjoying their food, they will have a productive meeting and can focus on each other, whether they are working or celebrating."



Rose Bouchier



Rose Bouchier's Fried Bannock

4 cups of flour

1 heaping tablespoon of baking powder

½ cup of milk or sour cream

¼ cup of sugar

¼ teaspoon of salt

Mix dry ingredients together in a big bowl.

With hands, form a well in the middle of the mixture.

Pour in milk or sour cream into the well.

Pour in 1 cup of warm water into the well.

Stir until the dough gets sticky.

In a large frying pan or wok, fill halfway with vegetable oil (half used and half new) and heat until simmering.

Spoon in doughnut-sized pieces of dough into the frying pan. Make a hole in the middle of the dough to cook faster.

Flip dough when sides turn brown.

Makes 12 pieces. For small serving, cut servings in half.

Serve with syrup, jam, jelly or peanut butter.



Who were the skywalkers?

The Mohawk skywalkers were the skilled and fearless men who helped shape one of the world's most recognizable skylines.

Their story began when they were hired as labourers to build a bridge over the St. Lawrence River between Canada and Mohawk land in New York State in the mid-1880s. Soon their reputation for excellence and bravery preceded them, and Mohawk men worked on almost all of New York's major construction projects, including the Empire State Building, the Chrysler Building, the George Washington Bridge, Madison Square Garden and the World Trade Center.

It's a tradition that continues today in both Canada and the US. For more information, visit www.aboriginalironworkers.ca.

Generations of Inspiration

Photo: Empire State Building Construction-1930, Lewis Wickes Hine, New York Public Library



For four years, Gerry Gionet worked shoulder-to-shoulder with Mohawk ironworkers, famed for their courage and grace on the high beams building New York City skyscrapers. And when you do that, a thing or two is bound to rub off.

"I saw the importance of their culture, and I observed the amazing influence they had on one of the world's most famous cities, and I felt proud to be an ironworker," says Gerry, president and CEO of Aqua Industrial Ltd. in Fort McMurray. "My grandfather was a millwright, my father was an ironworker, and when I returned to Alberta, I knew I wanted to build a business as an ironworker that could help youth experience the pride we take in our work."

Gerry says ironwork is in his blood, and he often looks to his family line for inspiration when he's faced with obstacles or a daunting task. His great-great uncle was the famed Gabriel Dumont, and his great-great grandfather was Michel Dumas. Both men played critical roles in bringing Louis Riel back to Canada, and Dumont commanded the Métis forces in the North-West Rebellion of 1885. Gerry may not have known them, but he's learned from their tenacity and bravery.

The past president of Métis Local 1935 and former vice president of the Northeastern Alberta Aboriginal Business Association, Gerry has fixed his focus on the future by building a business where safety is embedded in the culture and youth are welcomed, trained and mentored.

"The youth really just want someone to take the time to listen to them and give them the opportunity to share some of their



Gerry Gionet and his daughter Brigitte Jackson

ideas, and I understand that," says Gerry, who also employs his own daughter. "And even if you don't take their ideas, you need to explain why you don't, as that's how learning happens."

Over the last 13 years, the company, which has worked on many oil sands projects for companies such as Syncrude, has grown by 3,000 per cent and now employs more than 100 staff.

"I measure success not only by numbers, but by our record of safety," says Gerry. "I care about my workers and they know it, because sending them home safe at the end of the day takes priority over all else. And that's how you create a culture and a company that values people."



Lighting the Way

Suddenly thrust into the role of mother at just eight years old with the untimely death of her mother, Elsie Yanik looked after her younger brothers and sisters as they travelled to a residential school in Fort Resolution.

Today, more than eight decades later, she is a respected maternal figure for Wood Buffalo. As a mark of respect for her gentle leadership and contributions to the region, the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Committee selected the 93-year-old Métis Elder to light the cauldron at MacDonald Island when the Olympic torch came to Fort McMurray in November 2009.

“Carrying the torch was like a dream; I could never imagine something like that happening,” she says. “At first, I didn’t believe it when they called, and thought it was my nephew George Tuccaro playing a practical joke on me. I thought, ‘Why were they picking on me? I’m an Elder and I can’t run.’”

For anybody who has spent any time with Elsie, who has spent her life helping others, the answer is obvious. “She is our angel in disguise. We have so much to learn from her and she is so willing to share it with everybody,” says May-Britt Jensen-Jahelka, general manager

of Métis Local 1935. “She’s lived through the best and worst of times, but she always sees a positive light in everything. She’s so strong and determined.”

Elsie’s remarkable journey in life led her through residential school at Fort Resolution, raising a family by herself in a trapper’s cabin in the

Northwest Territories and serving as a supervisor at the Holy Angels Residential School in Fort Chipewyan after her five daughters and one son had grown up. “I love working with children and teaching them,” she says. “The biggest thing with kids is being loving and kind. You’ll get a lot farther with them than if you scold them.”

For all the special honours Elsie has received over the years—such as the Wild Rose Foundation Volunteer of the Year Award, the Governor General’s Commemorative Medal for

Lifetime Achievement and the Keyano College Distinguished Citizen Award—she enjoys sharing the considerable wisdom earned from her extraordinary life without any fanfare. “My whole life is being with people and working with people. I love life: it will be one heck of a big fight before I go.”



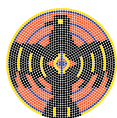
“The biggest thing with kids is being loving and kind,” says local Métis Elder Elsie Yanik.

Muriel Stanley Venne is recognized across Canada for her advocacy for Aboriginal women's rights, and in 2005 received the Order of Canada. "I can't tell you how many injustices I've seen and cried for and tried to address. More than I care to."



Fearless and Focused

Aboriginal women have found a voice in Muriel Stanley Venne, whose courageous advocacy has garnered respect and admiration across the country



When the fresh prairie winds turned warm in northern Alberta, a large white canvas tent would be erected outside the two-storey farmhouse. It was propped up by sturdy, freshly cut green logs. Inside was a wrought-iron bed with white flour-sack sheets tucked snugly beneath a lovely patchwork blanket.

For a little girl, it was accommodation fit for royalty. And Muriel Stanley Venne's grandmother—in her long-sleeved blouses and full, flowered skirts—looked like she might have played such a part once upon a time.

Muriel's grandmother was an impressive woman—at least, she certainly left an impression on Muriel. She was one of Muriel's early influences—a woman whose love of nature prompted Muriel to sleep outside in the summer, a woman of strength and knowledge who taught her granddaughter to spin wool and churn butter. This was a woman who understood the value of friendship and community and invested herself in others, including a dear friend Muriel knew only as Grandma Mennie.

If only Muriel's grandmother could have known that her precious, curious granddaughter would take her respect and admiration for the Aboriginal woman and turn it into a life of fierce service to the preservation of indigenous women's rights.

"I can't tell you how many injustices I've seen and cried for and tried to address," says Muriel. "More than I care to. Nothing outrages me more than the indifference I see for Aboriginal women."

As president and founder of the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women (IAAW), she works ceaselessly to tackle the issues confronting Aboriginal women. Under her leadership, IAAW has declared 2005 to 2015 as the Decade of Difference for Aboriginal Women. She has also created the Esquao Awards, a province-wide recognition for Aboriginal women sponsored in part by Syncrude. Bringing government, corporations and community together to honour the accomplishments

of Aboriginal women, this annual event now attracts 1,000 people.

"Esquao—it's a beautiful word," says Muriel. "And we have taken it back. It's ours, and it's beautiful. Esquao is the stylized version of the Cree word for 'woman.' We reclaimed it so that the word 'squaw' would never ever be used, because being called a squaw is dehumanizing and always derogatory."

Over the last 15 years, the Esquao Awards have honoured over 300 First Nations and Métis women from 74 communities in Alberta. Many have honoured Muriel for her efforts over the years, and in 2005 she received the Order of Canada and the Governor General's Award in Commemoration of the Persons Case.

Muriel is the type of individual who thinks nothing of calling up the chief of police if she has a matter to discuss. Over the years, she has enjoyed the company of many powerful and influential people, including former Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Ralph Steinhauer and university namesake Grant MacEwan.

She is also the sort of person who coincidentally sits next to a student from Colombia on a flight from Toronto to Edmonton and upon finding the young university student has had difficulty finding accommodation, invites him home to come live with her until the next semester begins. She laughs at the memory as if it were no inconvenience at all. "I just believe things happen the way they are supposed to happen," she says. "And his mother sent me a beautiful note and virtual flowers to thank me. She was so grateful, and as a mother, how could I not help this wonderful young man?"

For Muriel, there is no rest from her God-given responsibilities as an Aboriginal woman, mother, friend, tireless advocate and truly fearless leader. "There's so much to do though," she says. "There isn't a day that goes by that discrimination isn't a reality in my life."

And rarely does a day go by when Muriel isn't standing up to speak out against it. Her grandmother may be gone, but her character lives on.

What were some challenges of growing up in such a difficult economic time? In those days I don't know if we thought about poverty at all. All we knew was that it was hard to get by.

What aren't you doing right now that you know you should be doing? Writing my book.

What's one of your earliest memories of discrimination? Growing up in a predominantly Ukrainian community, I remember coming home from school



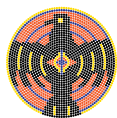
crying because I was not included in the practices for the Christmas concert. My mother must have protested and the school must have reconsidered, because the next thing I knew my mother was taking me to be measured for the Ukrainian costumes we were to wear at the Christmas concert. My mother paid for the costumes, and my brother and I learned the Ukrainian dances and memorized the Christmas carols. I can still hear the choir from both the junior and senior rooms singing the beautiful songs of Christmas.

May-Britt Jensen-Jahelka is the most recent recipient of the Leadership Award at the Regional Aboriginal Recognition Awards.



Heart of Gold

May-Britt Jensen-Jahelka



When May-Britt Jensen-Jahelka discovered that students from Fort Chipewyan had no transportation to the Traditional Celebration of Achievement ceremony, she took action, rallying resources to get the students plane tickets. Because of her efforts, the students were able to celebrate one of life's most memorable milestones together.

May-Britt, the general manager of Métis Local 1935 and Infinity Métis Corporation, has never been one to follow if she could take the lead herself. Instrumental in bringing Métis employment services to Fort McMurray, she has now set her sights on helping the Local secure a piece of property to build its own cultural centre.

"I think a cultural centre will be instrumental in creating awareness and preserving the history of the Métis people for future generations to understand who the previous generations were and how they used the land. It was their lifeline," says May-Britt. "I love my culture, and I'm very proud of being Métis."

That is evident to all, says Joe Hamelin, a Métis Local 1935 board member and Métis Elder. "May-Britt cares about her culture and about people. She's just a true people person who gets along with everyone," he says.

May-Britt recently won the Leadership Award sponsored by Syncrude at the Regional Aboriginal Recognition Awards. She credits the role of Elders in her life for sharing their wisdom and motivating her to be the change she wants to see.

Young people keep her focused as well. "The youth inspire me because there is so much potential there," says May-Britt. "I just have a passion to see people succeed and follow what's in their hearts."

And after raising two boys of her own, May-Britt likes to invest her time in coaching and mentoring youth. "We need to engage our youth, because if they aren't involved, then why are we doing all of this anyway?"

What aren't you doing right now that you feel you should be doing?

I feel like I should be more connected to Mother Earth. I need to spend more time gardening and learning about traditional medicines. I need more time in the bush.



Where was your favourite place to be when you were 10? At my mom and dad's fishing lodge at Gypsy Lake. It was so beautiful and peaceful, and I just loved to be there.

Any advice? Honour yourself. If you are truthful, you will earn the respect of others. Don't take it for granted.

Scholarship recipient
Sage Mitchell
looks forward to a
teaching career in
remote Aboriginal
communities.



Hope in Harmony

Sage Mitchell



Sage Mitchell may play the flute, saxophone and piccolo, but she's actually hoping to become a pied piper of sorts by setting an example for Aboriginal youth to follow.

"I have worked hard to get to this point in my life and won't have limits stand in my way," says Sage, a fiercely determined second-year Keyano College student who has plans to earn an education degree. "I have two younger siblings, and I want to ensure that I am a good role model for them. I want to show them that with hard work you can achieve your goals. But most of all, I want them to know how good it feels to set a goal and achieve it."

Thanks to years spent performing in high school band and choir programs, Sage is quite accustomed to being on stage. And she's using her hard-earned confidence to encourage other youth to aggressively pursue their aspirations.

"My goal is to become a music teacher and teach in an Aboriginal community," says Sage. "Many times, these small remote communities have trouble getting teachers—and

even more so, music teachers. Music is a major part of Aboriginal culture, and I feel that it needs to be taught more in these communities to encourage the students to develop a love for music at an early age and maintain an important part of their culture."

Sage was recently recognized with the Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce Leaders of Tomorrow Award and was the only Canadian—and first Aboriginal person—to be chosen for a \$15,000 Girls Inc. scholarship. She was also awarded several other scholarships, including the Syncrude Higher Education Awards Program scholarship for children of Syncrude employees.

Sage plans to attend Keyano College for two years and then transfer to the University of Lethbridge to complete a Bachelor of Education with a major in Music and a minor in English.

What's your favourite kind of music to listen to? I think when you're into music, you need to give everything a chance, so I have always listened to all kinds of music. I do play mostly classical music though.



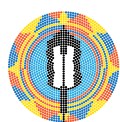
What's your goal right now? My goal right now is to finish school, and I don't want anything to distract me from that, so everything else has to come second to that. I've been working part-time for over five years, but I've even cut my hours at work to about four hours a week. I think when you set a goal, you have to be sure you don't let anything else interfere.

Syncrude stakeholder relations advisor Nonnie Roth enjoyed a six-month secondment to help capture the memories and traditional knowledge of local Métis Elders.



Journey of Discovery

Nonnie Roth



But where did they get the sugar?

This was the question that haunted Syncrude stakeholder relations advisor Nonnie Roth one night, keeping sleep at bay.

Nonnie had spent the evening listening to the stories of one of the 95 individuals interviewed for *Traditional Land Use and Occupancy Study—Mark of the Métis*, an oral history research project for Métis Local 1935.

"I was talking to one lady about how she had helped keep her family fed by preserving food," says Nonnie, who was granted a six-month secondment to work on the project. "After I left, I thought, 'But where did they get the sugar?' And this seemed to be the way my interviews would go. It was always a qualitative interview that was very rich, and I would have no idea where it would end up, or where the questions would lead us."

Nonnie has driven many miles, drunk much tea and even had all her video equipment stolen and hastily replaced. She says it has been the journey of a lifetime venturing back through the years with the people who lived through them.

"It has been quite the process and a privilege conducting Elder interviews, recording genealogies and using maps to plot berry-picking sites, burial sites and the places where people lived," says Nonnie. "But at the end of the day, assembling the information will be a significant contribution to Métis history in the area, and we will all have something to leave our grandchildren."

Nonnie's knowledge of the area, love of learning and educational and professional achievements all made her an ideal candidate to tackle the complex project. "I loved school from day one," says Nonnie, whose Métis mother was born

in northern Alberta and whose father emigrated from Russia. "To me, it was the best thing on Earth, but when I was 14—my father had left when I was eight years old—I quit school to help care for the kids, because there were still six of the 10 children at home and Mom had to work hard."

Nonnie eventually completed her high school and university education. She even went on to earn her master's in nursing in 2005.

"Nonnie is a dedicated employee who continually strives for self-improvement," says Syncrude's chief medical officer, Dr. Tom Lawley. "She has great creativity and is always willing to accept and explore new ideas."

Nonnie has been very active in advancing the nursing profession. She served on the board of directors for Aboriginal Nurses of Canada and was on the national steering committee for Building Environmental Aboriginal Human Resources.

"When I was a little girl, there weren't many doctors around, and my mom was the one who did everything—treating cuts and wounds and caring for the sick," says Nonnie. "I guess it was just innate. When I was little, if there was a chicken with a broken leg, I was fixing it."

Now, the woman who spent so many years in the role of healer can add the role of recorder of history. And while doing so, she not only learned a thing or two about putting up preserves, but is also using the information she gathered to help preserve and share the heritage of local Métis people.

What was your favourite place to be when you were 10 years old?

In the bush with my brother or by myself looking at the plants. The moss always looked so beautiful, and the way the sun would stream through the leaves and hit the vegetation—that was what I thought heaven must be like. As a little girl, that was where I would pray. That was probably how I first began to develop my own spirituality. And as I grew older, although my mom was Catholic, I found the Native view of spirituality just fit me like an old dress.



What aren't you doing that you think you should be doing right now?

I know I need to be spending more time in my garden. I have a fabulous garden, but this year I lost a whole lot of peas and beans because I couldn't get there to harvest them. My grandchildren love to come with me and play in the dirt and hoe the potatoes. Gardening is just good for you in so many ways.

"In many ways, this project is not only professionally fulfilling, but it has helped me reconfirm my own value system too," says Cheryl Croucher, producer and host of CKUA's *Aboriginal Pathways*.



Message Maker



A radio program helps promote Aboriginal achievement to a global audience.

Cheryl Croucher has been hugged by Canada's longest-serving MLA, has experienced music in a completely new way thanks to a young Cree cellist and has shared conversation with one of Canada's best-known Aboriginal advocates.

It's all in a day's work as the producer of CKUA Radio's *Aboriginal Pathways* program.

"When I interview these individuals and learn about what they've done with their lives and what they've overcome, it inspires me, and I think, 'I can accomplish what I set out to do too,'" says Cheryl. "In many ways, this project is not only professionally fulfilling, but it has helped me reconfirm my own value system too."

As the mother of Métis daughters, Cheryl says the opportunity to explore human rights, the arts, spirituality, politics and personal triumphs with Aboriginal people from all over Alberta has altered her perspectives as a woman and as a mother.

And apparently these interviews have echoed around the world.

"The program presents a very concise, but very interesting window for educating us on the many accomplished Aboriginal people living and working here in Alberta, and it's a great opportunity to celebrate these individuals," says Ken Regan, general manager at CKUA Radio Network. "We get e-mails from people all over the world every day—they're so delighted to hear these stories."

The series, which is sponsored by Syncrude, airs eight times a week on CKUA and can also be heard at www.ckua.com.

A Few of Cheryl's Favourite Interviews

Lewis Cardinal

Cardinal, a member of the Sucker Creek First Nation, is a recipient of a National Aboriginal Achievement Award and has made a name for himself as the director of Native Student Services at the University of Alberta. He also helped establish the Aboriginal Voices Radio Network.

Dr. Cora Voyageur

Dr. Voyageur was the first First Nations woman to receive a PhD from the University of Alberta when she graduated in 1997. Today Cora, a member of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, is an author and a professor of sociology at the University of Calgary.

Cris Derksen

Derksen is a young cellist of Cree descent who attended the Victoria School for the Performing Arts in Edmonton. She has performed around the world, most recently at the Vancouver Olympic Games.



Program facilitator
Michelle Whitford assists
Ryan Belore on his latest
Li'l Laker masterpiece.

From Pizza to Picasso

The kids come together to cook, create, cooperate and investigate. And families and entire communities grow stronger because of it.

The newly launched Anzac Li'l Lakers Family Resource Centre, funded in part by Syncrude, saw between 120 and 160 visits per week last summer. This is thanks to their hugely successful summer programming, which includes the Li'l Chefs, Junior Picassos and Mad Science programs.

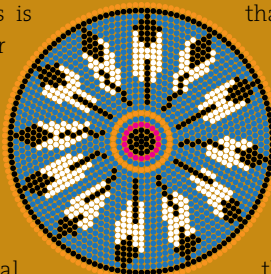
The Anzac community and nearby Fort McMurray First Nation is benefiting from the centre's investment in general children's programming, after-school programs, parental education, personal development and arts and culture workshops. And now the centre is taking over the Early Childhood Development Program (ECDP) from the Anzac School.

"Because of the ECDP, my daughter can recognize letters, familiar words and numbers and is beginning to read, all before entering kindergarten," says Jen Siver,

mother of two children ages three and five and president of the centre's board. "Our younger child has some speech barriers that we are confident will be greatly assisted through the interaction with other students as well as great programming. We are looking forward to watching our son develop new friendships and learn new skills that will become the building blocks for his future success."

"Each child is born brimming with potential, and the centre wants to help ensure that this potential is uncovered and unlocked," says Cindy McIntosh, the centre's executive director. "Prior to April, we were completely volunteer-run, and now thanks to the support of those who believe in what we're doing, we have our own permanent space with a staff of four and a team of volunteers," she says. "We're looking forward to focusing on family literacy this year, and I think that it's going to continue to positively impact our whole community."

For more information, visit www.lillakersfrc.com.





Lessons From the Earth



A new edu-kit is helping students across the north learn more about bison and their role in Aboriginal culture.

There's much for a young student to learn about bison—where they live, the food they eat and their role in Aboriginal culture. But what one student at Fort McKay School learned from the new bison edu-kits isn't always easily taught. "I learned to be respectful of the bison," he says.

Each year, Syncrude assists the Fort McKay First Nation with a bison harvest. Animals are donated from the Beaver Creek Wood Bison Ranch, which is co-managed by Syncrude and the First Nation.

Local teachers, however, felt the harvest would be more meaningful to students if there was an educational component. So more than 30 kits—including books, documents, games, DVDs, bison bones and hides—were created. Syncrude funded the effort, and now a bison edu-kit can be found at every school in the Northland School Division.

"The purpose of the Bison Harvest Curriculum project is to provide background knowledge to students so they can develop an understanding of why the harvest happens in their community," says Casey Brown, past principal at Fort McKay School. "We also feel that the traditional component of the harvest needs to be understood and our students need to be prepared before they participate in it."

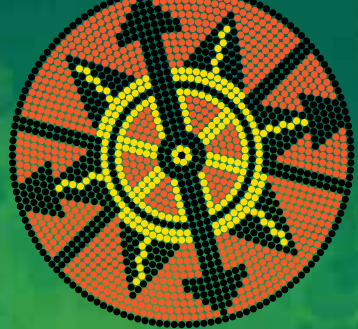
The kit includes resources for pre-kindergarten through to grade nine. "The students really enjoy the hands-on activities as well as the stories," says current Fort McKay principal Ruth Ryan.

Assembling the kits was not without its challenges, but Casey explains that as soon as people understood the project, they were eager to help out where they could. "Getting all of the books ordered was difficult," says Casey. "One book was out of print, but when we told the publisher why we needed it, they printed 33 copies specifically for us."

Casey says the project was a great learning experience. "Every one of us learned things we did not know. It is a positive project that promotes Fort McKay in a very positive light. Other schools and communities will benefit greatly."

When I Grow up

We asked six children to tell us what they'd like to do or be when they grow up. Here are their answers...



We asked six children to tell us what they'd like to do or be when they grow up.





Feather Bourque-Jenner, age 12, Willow Lake Métis Local #780 Ever since I was a little girl, I have loved animals. Since I can remember, I've always had an interest in learning more about them. When I was about six years old, I knew I was going to work with animals when I grew up. I started reading animal encyclopedias and watching shows about animals on TV. I've learned many interesting facts. When I was nine years old, I heard of the job title of a zoologist and I knew that is what I wanted to be. A zoologist is a scientist that studies animals. The reason I want to be a zoologist is to help all animals in their own habitat to continue to survive and adapt to the changes in the world and to help people to understand how important they are to us.



Janelle Flett, age 12, Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation When I grow up I want to do something that I will enjoy. I enjoy sports so I would like to be a soccer player or something to do with sports. Sports are fun for me and I am pretty good at them. Doing hair sounds pretty cool too. That way I can do my own hair :). That's what I want to be for now.



Shyla Kreutzer, age 13, Fort McMurray First Nation #468 When I grow up I want to be an archaeologist. History is the story of people, the study of our past. The scientific study of archaeology investigates even the tiniest fragments left behind to help us create a more complete picture of the past. I think by understanding our past we may be able to gain a more balanced view of the present.



Paris Orr, age 9, Fort McKay First Nation I would like to be so many things. A veterinarian because I love animals and there are so many that need help. Or an animator, designing and voicing cartoons. There are so many choices. I can be anything I want. I'm Paris Orr.



Keegan James Pruden, age 14, Fort McKay First Nation I would like to do something with hockey. It has always been my dream to be a hockey player. If I cannot be a hockey player, I would like to be a sports broadcaster or even teach other kids how to play hockey. It is important to be a role model and stay fit!



Elliot Albert Deltess, age 14, Chipewyan Prairie Dene First Nation I would like to be a cardiovascular surgeon, because I find it interesting. I researched on the Internet and found it to be interesting. I know it takes four years to get a PhD and I am planning on going to university right after I graduate from high school.



“This is my



home.”

Sometimes freedom cannot be described in words. For Fort Chipewyan resident Tim Flett, freedom is a sense of place and knowing there's nowhere else he'd rather be.



Less than 48 hours after loading oil sand into the back of heavy haulers with a massive electric shovel at Syncrude's north mine, Tim Flett sinks a pitchfork into a small but well-tended garden on the edge of the Athabasca River.

A deft shake causes the black soil to fall away and reveal enough good-sized russet potatoes to make a nice side dish for a meal at his nearby cabin, located in the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation's traditional hunting grounds.

"They are great boiled. Maybe we could catch a pickerel or two

"It's easy for me to come out here and spend the day cutting the grass or weeding the garden and then having a cold beer and just watching the river go by. There's nobody in a race to get anywhere in a hurry."

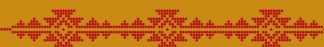
in the creek," says Tim. "Or we could find a moose, although it's probably a little early in the year right now to go hunting. But if we could find one, we'd be eating very well tonight."

While Tim appreciates his job as a shovel oiler, the days spent at his cabin overlooking the Athabasca River near Jackfish Creek keep him centred and at peace.

"Why do I live in Fort Chip? Freedom," Tim says.

Tim began working at Syncrude in 1983, shortly after the Fort Chipewyan Rotational Employment Program started. Twenty-seven years later, he holds no regrets about splitting time between two communities.

"I was born and raised in Fort Chip. This is my home," says the father of four. "It's better to raise kids in this community. Everybody knows everybody else and people look out for each other. That's why you still see children playing in the streets by themselves."





“It’s better to raise kids in this community. Everybody knows everybody else and people look out for each other. That’s why you still see children playing in the streets by themselves.”





During his days off, Tim stays at home and cooks lunch for his 15-year-old son, Tyler, and 11-year-old daughter, Hilary, who walk home from nearby Athabasca Delta Community School whenever their father is at home. It's easy to see why, as Tim expertly strains tomato juice from canned tomatoes to pour over a pasta dish he's prepared for his daughter. "She likes the juice but not the tomatoes," he says. "Go figure."

When he is down in Fort McMurray, Tim gets the chance to see his daughter, Ashley Laviolette, who works for a band-owned contractor on Syncrude's site, and son Lester, a Syncrude heavy equipment operator. "Both of them have done very well for themselves down there, but both would like to come back to Chip," says Tim. "Lester is on the waiting list for the rotational program. They are in Fort McMurray for the opportunity, just like me. But they grew up in Chip and miss the freedom up here. When you come from here, rush-hour traffic in Fort McMurray is incredible."

While the children rarely join Tim for the 45-minute boat ride across Lake Athabasca and through several portages to the family's cabin, his wife, Leanne—an administrator with Mikisew Tech Services—will come out on weekends when Tim is at home.

"The kids used to come out here when they were younger, but they don't like the bush as much these days," he says. "It's easy for me to come out here and spend the day cutting the grass or weeding the garden and then having a cold beer and just watching the river go by. There's nobody in a race to get anywhere in a hurry."

Tim can watch the Athabasca River roll by from his cabin (left). While he digs oil sands for a living, Tim really enjoys unearthing potatoes from a garden behind his cabin (below). Tyler and Hilary Flett enjoy their father's days off almost as much as he does (below left).

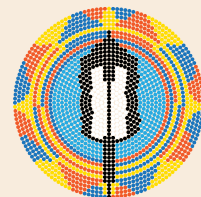


Rotational Employment Program Celebrates 30 Years

In 2010, the Fort Chipewyan Rotational Employment Program reached a significant milestone. It was 30 years ago that Syncrude started up the program to provide career opportunities for those living in the remote community.

The rotational program today serves 29 residents, more than double the number from a year ago. It provides employees with free accommodation for the duration of their shift at Syncrude as well as free air transport to and from Fort Chipewyan. Recently, the program expanded to southern communities with free ground transportation. Four residents of Janvier and Conklin now take part.

Syncrude is accepting applications for candidates who are interested in the program and meet employment requirements. For more information and to apply, contact our Aboriginal recruitment representative, Belinda Gauvreau, at 780.790.6123.





Taking Care of Business



When Melanie and Lloyd Antoine decided to go for it, they were relieved to know they weren't going it alone.

The Northeastern Alberta Aboriginal Business Association (NAABA), a non-profit organization committed to supporting an environment that promotes businesses, jobs and training for the betterment of all Aboriginal people in the region, came alongside Melanie and Lloyd as they launched and grew A.P.E. Maintenance Ltd.

"We believe that NAABA is a key to our future growth and success," says Melanie, co-founder of A.P.E. Maintenance, a local millwright and expediting service. "I try not to miss any event that NAABA hosts because it will be so beneficial that I can't afford to miss it."

Melanie, a member of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, and Lloyd, a member of the Mikisew Cree First Nation, are both former Syncrude employees and full NAABA members. The association has more than 120 full members and certifies that each are qualified by at least 51 per cent Aboriginal ownership. There are also about 180 associate members.

Syncrude is a founding associate member and active participant with the organization. Nicole Bourque-Bouchier,



Cheryl Alexander, general manager
of the Northeastern Alberta Aboriginal
Business Association

past NAABA president, says it was 15 years ago, when NAABA was "able to get the ear of Syncrude," that it really took root. "They saw our value early on and really helped keep us motivated to grow," says Nicole.

Melanie says her NAABA membership provides networking opportunities that resulted in jobs, a wealth of contacts from industry and other businesses, valuable information sessions, business-to-business promotion and business opportunities through NAABA Net.

NAABA is always seeking new ways to keep members successful and connected.

The Tools for Success seminars, for example, provide assistance with procurement strategies and are enormously popular, says Cheryl Alexander, NAABA's general manager.

"Our annual Aboriginal Business Showcase has grown steadily over the last three years as well," says Cheryl. "Now we're looking forward to launching our Opportunities in Action program. It will provide a blueprint of best practices to assist our associate members in building strong working relationships with Aboriginal businesses."

For more information, visit www.naaba.ca.

1. Membership has its privileges: Become a member of established and recognized business groups like NAABA and attend events where there will be business owners or decision-makers.

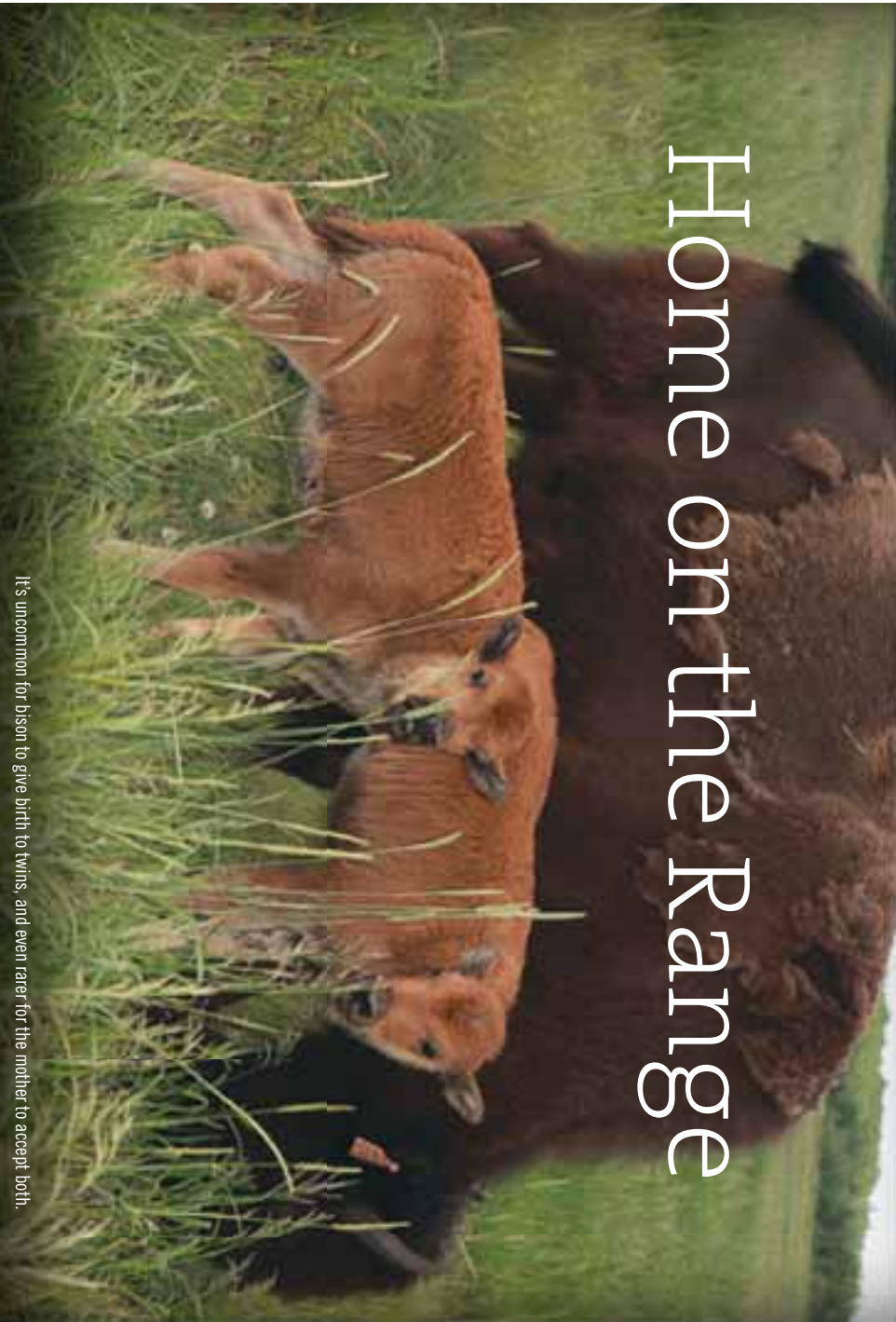
2. Talk to strangers: Use events to meet people you do not know, introducing yourself with a firm handshake. After they introduce themselves, ask them questions about their business. Make the conversation about them and not you. Networking is about relationships.

Four Tips for Successful Networking

3. Follow up: After the event, send a follow-up e-mail or note or call to make an appointment. Remind them of where you met and who you are and invite them to other networking events or an event organized by your business.

4. Face-to-face: If they agree to meet with you again, ask more in-depth questions about their business and find out if and how you can help them. If you can, talk about the solutions and benefits you offer.

Home on the Range



It's uncommon for bison to give birth to twins, and even rarer for the mother to accept both.



A single animal weighs about the same as eight black bears, and a charging herd can reach speeds of up to 60 kilometres per hour. Yet Harvey Rolland's presence hardly causes a huff or a head toss among the bison herd at Beaver Creek Wood Bison Ranch.

"I don't know if the bison know me or not but I'm used to them and they seem to be used to me," says the Fort McKay Elder and a right-hand man to Brad Ramstead, the senior reclamation scientist and project manager who oversees the ranch for Fort McKay Environment LP.

Harvey's work overseeing fencing and infrastructure has made him an invaluable asset at the ranch since 1991, and he enjoys his workplace and the autonomy. "Stick me in a meeting and I feel like falling asleep," he says. "I enjoy the work. Brad Ramstead is the best guy I've ever worked for, a great boss. I know what to do, and they know it and trust me to do the right thing."

Everyone on the ranch takes pride in the herd of about 300, which regularly earns livestock awards and accolades from across the country. The herd brought in a bronze trophy and four other top-five rankings at the last Canadian National Bison Show and Sale. It also came home with the Premier Breeder Award from the Saskatchewan Bison Association last year.



"We're really fortunate to have some terrific people working with us at the ranch, and that has definitely contributed to our success" ~ Brad Ramstead

Westlock Veterinary Center veterinarian Roy Lewis agrees it's an exceptionally healthy herd. "Not only are the reproductive rates and growth rates consistently showing these are healthy animals, but Syncrude really goes beyond what it's required to do to ensure not only that the animals stay healthy, but that the industry benefits as a whole as well," says Roy.

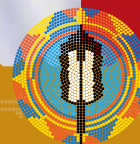
Although mandatory testing for brucellosis and tuberculosis was abandoned several years ago, the ranch continues to test 15 per cent of its herd every fall. Brad also worked very hard to complete the necessary research and paperwork to have the herd registered as pure wood bison.

However, Brad attributes the success of the herd, which grazes on reclaimed land, to the team. "We're really fortunate to have some terrific people working with us at the ranch, and that has definitely contributed to our success," he says. "Harvey is so important to what we've done, and he's just a very hardworking guy with a heart of gold. We are proud of our herd, and we work hard to take good care of them."

The ranch will also continue to be a valuable resource for those studying the species because researchers will have a rare opportunity to study the bison twins born in the spring of 2010. "With cattle, when male and female twins are born, the female is almost always sterile, so it will be interesting to find out if this holds true for bison as well," says Brad.



Kelly Lendsay,
president and CEO
of the Aboriginal
Human Resource
Council



Champions of Diversity

Tell me and I'll forget. Show me, and I may not remember. Involve me, and I'll understand. This North American Native proverb is at the heart of inclusion. And inclusion is at the top of the agenda of the Aboriginal Human Resource Council (AHRC).

The council works toward indigenous inclusion in Canada's workforce so everyone can reap the benefits of equality and diversity. "We still struggle in Canada with employment equity for Aboriginal candidates," says Kelly Lendsay, AHRC president and CEO. "What we need are more partners that are willing to take a leadership role in making a true effort to hire Aboriginal talent and work with Aboriginal businesses. And we learn a lot as an organization by listening to our partners to try and understand any potential barriers and understand how those obstacles can be overcome. The members of our Leadership Circle, such as Syncrude, provide a kind of inclusion laboratory, which gives us inside knowledge we can use to further inclusion."

The AHRC, which launched the Leadership Circle in 2008/09 with fewer than 30 partners, has set a goal of 100 companies this year.

In response to feedback from its partners, the council is developing and expanding its online learning programs. "We have been providing in-house training, but now we're hearing that online training is going to be in demand, so we've launched an online Aboriginal procurement training program, and Syncrude actually helped us develop that tool," says Kelly.

As one of Canada's largest employers of Aboriginal people, Syncrude is more than willing to share what it has learned about successfully recruiting Aboriginal people, says Dan Brown, manager of Process Control and Automation at Syncrude, an AHRC board member and member of the York Factory First Nation in Manitoba. "This is a resource pool with a lot of talent, and it brings value to our company to actively recruit and seek to retain Aboriginal employees."

The AHRC intends to continue developing tools, resources and programs to assist employers in their efforts toward inclusion. "We all benefit from inclusion," says Kelly. "Just talk to the members of our Leadership Circle, and they will tell you. They will show you it works."

For more information, visit www.aboriginalhr.ca.

Employment Opportunities Unlimited at Annual Event

Inclusion Works is Canada's largest Aboriginal HR and employment event, bringing together top First Nation, Métis and Inuit post-secondary graduates with leading-edge employers. During the two-day event, business, Aboriginal, education and government leaders speak on workplace diversity, inclusion and economic opportunity.

"The event exceeded every expectation I could have possibly had," says Jaxon Deautels, a post-secondary graduate who participated in the 2010 conference in Toronto. "Inclusion Works left me feeling motivated and empowered to find the perfect job for me. I have always been proud of my Métis roots, and this event strengthened my pride."

This year at the conference, the Aboriginal Human Resource Council, which hosts the event, signed a landmark international good faith human resources agreement with the National Native American Human Resources Association, which represents more than 150 US-based tribes. The signing marked the first step in international cooperation to advance human resource development in indigenous partnerships, recruitment, retention, advancement, procurement and career development.



From Curiosity to Careers



A new program at Keyano College is helping create opportunities for successful trades employment.

Roxanne Piche has set her sights on a trades apprenticeship through Keyano College (left). The first graduates from the Syncrude Aboriginal Trades Preparation program (below).



There were six times more people than there were seats, but Jesse Byrne made it into the Syncrude Aboriginal Trades Preparation (SATP) Program and now hopes to make much of the opportunity.

"I enrolled in the SATP Program so I could gain the experience needed to become a journeyman heavy equipment technician and start a successful career," says Jesse. "I want to use what I learn in this program to excel in any future career or endeavour I pursue."

That is exactly what the SATP Program was designed to do when it was launched in 2009 with a Syncrude investment of almost \$2 million. The 29-week full-time program culminates in a month-long work placement with Syncrude and is designed to give local Aboriginal students the necessary skills and competencies to proceed on an apprenticeship path with Syncrude or into further formal education.

Launching a program to run simultaneously in four communities throughout Wood Buffalo involved the coordination of staff, sponsors, instructional technologies, work placements and transportation. However, program manager Janet Lowndes says one of the greatest challenges

was the coordination of the selection process. "Imagine selecting only 40 trainees from 240 excited and interested applicants," she says. "What has become obvious already this year is that the 40 students feel a sense of pride and determination," says Janet. "The greatest reward possible is to see students succeed. Success comes in many forms. Obviously a student experiences success when they are selected for employment as an indentured tradesperson, but success can also be seen when a student's self-confidence, enthusiasm and industry awareness increase."

Syncrude president and CEO Scott Sullivan describes the workforce needs in the oil sands as tremendous. "We will require leading-edge training programs, like the ones offered at Keyano," he says. "These are key to giving people the skills they need to take part in a high-tech industry."

Janet says the program gives students the opportunity to upgrade their education, explore trades occupations, improve their employability and work readiness skills, learn more about the safety culture and gain work experience at the Syncrude work site.

For more information, visit www.keyano.ca.



Cleaning Up the Skies

Emissions reduction project starts up in 2011 Construction is nearly complete on Syncrude's \$1.6-billion project to reduce air emissions and protect regional air quality.

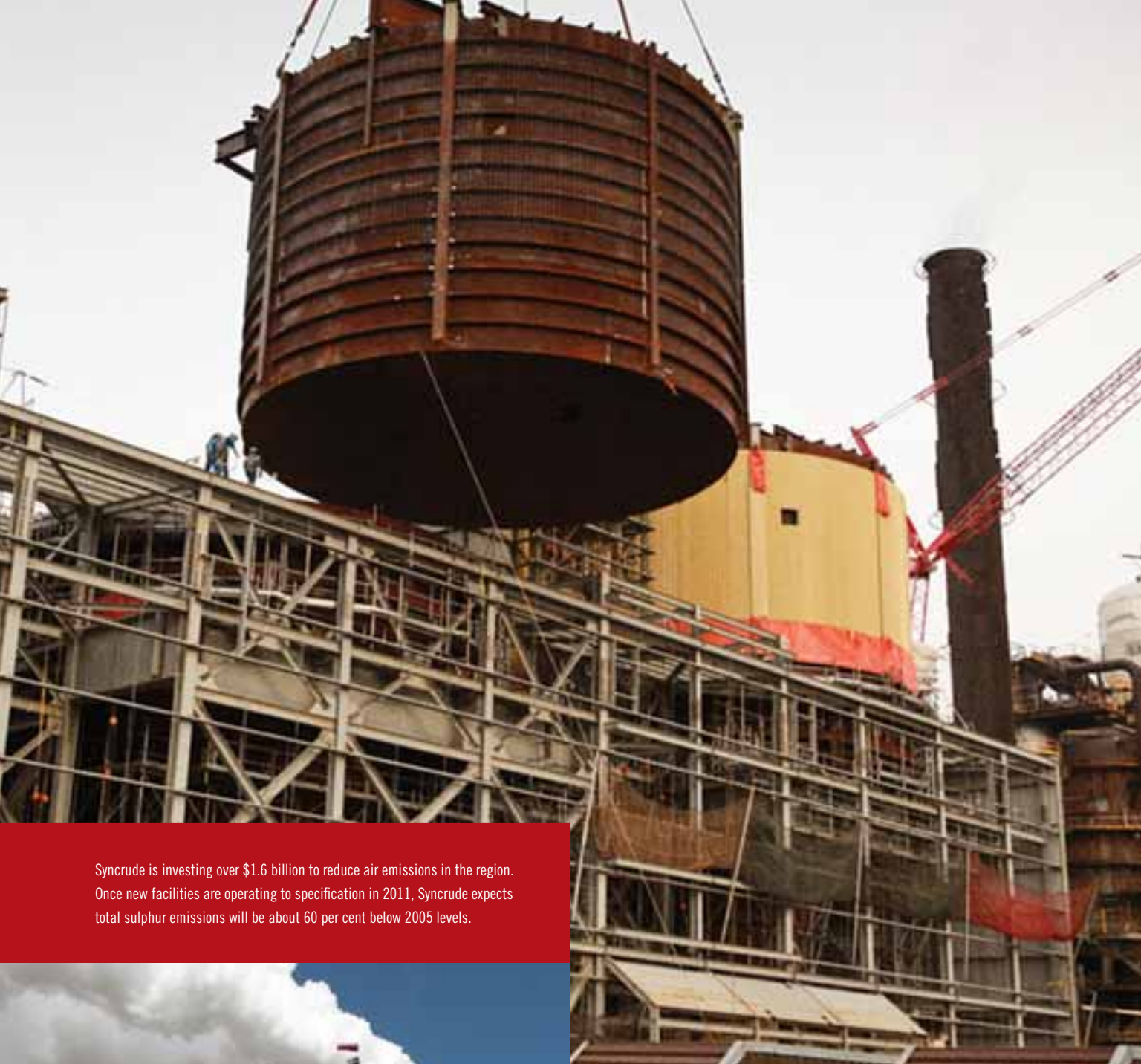
The project is building a flue gas desulphurization unit, or FGD, onto two original cokers, built in the late 1970s. Emissions reduction processes have already been installed on a third coker that commenced operation in 2006.

When operating to specification after 2011, Syncrude expects to reduce total sulphur emissions (SO_2) by about 60 per cent from what they were in 2005.

"Our neighbours expect responsible action from Syncrude and this investment will ensure that regional air quality remains good," says Brian Fairley, Syncrude's vice president of Production.

It's a big job. About 1,000 people are working on the project, and they have the added challenge of building the unit within the confines of an operating plant.

Brian says that while Syncrude's neighbours want to see the improvement, Syncrude employees also strongly support the project. "Employees want to know they work for an organization that is responsible and forward thinking," he says. "We have a lot of great people here who are committed to doing the right thing. They work extremely hard every day to improve our operation and reduce our environmental impacts. We need to stay focused on that goal for everyone's peace of mind."



Syncrude is investing over \$1.6 billion to reduce air emissions in the region. Once new facilities are operating to specification in 2011, Syncrude expects total sulphur emissions will be about 60 per cent below 2005 levels.



What's That Plume in the Sky?

Many neighbours have expressed concern about a vapour plume that is often visible in the skyline above Syncrude's Mildred Lake plant. It comes from the flue gas desulphurization (FGD) unit and related equipment that began operating in 2006 to reduce air emissions from Coker 8-3.

Syncrude environmental advisor Diane Phillips explains: "Plant processes remove the vast majority of sulphur and pollutants that would otherwise enter the airshed. However, the FGD plume still contains trace amounts which scatter light and give it a colour. The plume also contains water vapour, which reacts with the cooler air outside of the stack and makes the plume visible." She emphasizes that the operation is monitored closely to ensure releases are minimized, and all emission data is reported to regulators.



Boreal Builders

Teams of biologists, scientists and engineers are developing new and faster ways to restore land impacted by oil sands development

Syncrude has laid out an aggressive plan to manage tailings volumes and increase the pace of reclamation. In fact, this past April, Syncrude was among the first to have its plans conditionally approved by provincial regulators.

Tailings is the mixture of sand, silts, clay, water and residual hydrocarbon that remains after bitumen is extracted from oil sands. Tailings is stored either in mined-out areas or above-ground containment structures—commonly referred to as basins or ponds—where the water is recycled for plant operations. In 2009, 87 per cent of the water Syncrude used was recycled from tailings settling basins.

Syncrude is implementing a multi-pronged approach to manage tailings and comply with the Energy Resources and Conservation Board Directive 074, which requires oil sands operators to reduce fluid tailings volumes. After 2015, Syncrude's plan will exceed the directive's requirements.

Water capping is one approach. It involves layering water over a deposit of fine tails to form a lake. Syncrude began researching this technology more than 20 years ago with bench-scale laboratory experiments, followed by 11 test ponds of various sizes. A commercial-scale project in the former west mine pit will be commissioned in 2012 to demonstrate the water-capping concept. "Research field pilot tests show that water-capped fine tailings evolve into healthy aquatic ecosystems," says Ron Lewko, Syncrude's team leader of Environmental Research.

Another approach is **composite tails**. This combines fine tails with gypsum and sand as the tailings are deposited. The mixture causes the tailings to settle faster, enabling the development of reclaimed areas of grass, trees and wetlands. "We're filling in our former east mine with composite tails and expect to begin planting vegetation within three years," says Ron. "The transformation will be incredible." Syncrude is also building a 50-hectare fen wetland on the reclaimed area, the first of its kind in the industry.



The former east mine (above) was once a pit about 80 metres deep. It is being filled with sand using composite tails technology. Once soil placement and vegetation planting are complete, the area will start evolving toward a landscape similar to another Syncrude reclaimed area, the South Bison Hills (right).



Syncrude has successfully piloted a third approach using **centrifuge processing**. Centrifuging tailings accelerates the release of water and reduces overall volume by 50 per cent or more. Centrifuging will be executed in three stages: a commercial-scale demonstration in 2012 followed by the first phase of a commercial plant in 2015, then an increase in conversion capacity in 2018.

Dr. Randy Mikula, head of the Extraction and Tailings team at Natural Resources Canada, has spent more than 20 years researching oil sands processing and tailings. He's positive about centrifuging. "It's an exciting time to be working on tailings. I would say that in the past 10 years we've seen as much progress as in the previous 30. Syncrude is one of the companies on the leading edge of new technology development, and although I am personally intrigued with the potential of centrifugation, significant test programs are also under way for a wide variety of new tailings management technologies."

Syncrude's research centre, armed with an annual budget of around \$50 million, is intensifying its focus on finding those solutions, which could include accelerated dewatering, thin-lift drying and thickened tails.

The Science of Recreating a Fen Wetland

The northwest corner of Syncrude's original east mine may look like dirt and sand with wood strewn about. But it's actually the first stages of reclamation.

Take a walk through the 50-hectare Sandhill Fen Watershed project and you soon learn a little about the science involved in creating a wetland that will blend naturally into the surrounding area.

Because recreating a fen of this size and magnitude has never been attempted before, a team of over 15 researchers—both Syncrude and external scientists—came together to brainstorm a conceptual design. Carla Wytrykush is a key member of this team. "Our goal is to construct the initial conditions necessary to develop a self-sustaining fen wetland and its watershed," says the Syncrude environmental scientist and wetland ecologist.

Another purpose of this project is to develop operational methods to reclaim soft tailings deposits.

"We want to address a variety of components of landform performance, including hydrology, hydrogeology, salt, water and carbon balance, revegetation techniques and vegetation establishment," says Carla. "We also want to better understand how to propagate and plant a variety of shrub species, including blueberry, bearberry and cranberry in the uplands."

And the reason for the wood? They contain the seeds that will help establish these desired shrubs.





“Aboriginal people in this area have real concerns about the land and how it is being reclaimed.”

Discovery Through Dialogue



Steve Gaudet, manager of Environmental Affairs, explains how the radar system tracks the flight pattern of birds across Syncrude's leases.

Not many people who live in the Wood Buffalo region can remember what the area looked like before oil sands development.

But that's not the case with 40 guests from the Mikisew Cree First Nation, Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, Fort McMurray First Nation and Métis Local 1935, who attended Syncrude's annual First Nations Elders tour in June.

“Because they've known this land, they've seen the changes,” explains John Ellingsen, Environmental Affairs team leader. “They want to make sure their children and grandchildren enjoy getting out into the land. When they see all this industrial development, they want to make sure that things are put back together when the industry is done. For them it's not about reclaiming land for forestry; it's about reclaiming land for personal enjoyment and spiritual connection.”

The Elders tour takes place every June over a two-day period. “The agenda is driven by what the participants have to say,” says Syncrude stakeholder relations advisor Linda Bucke. “Aboriginal people in this area have real concerns about the land and how it is being reclaimed. Every year, when we have our question and answer follow-up session after the tour, we gather that information and plan an agenda for the next year based on the feedback.”

This year, the tour included visits to an air monitoring station, the waterfowl monitoring radar station, the Beaver Creek Wood Bison Ranch and a fen reclamation research area. “Showing is always better than telling,” says Linda. “It is far more meaningful when people can see the results of your hard work in reclamation and what you're doing by reproducing a fen or planting a forest. It shows them you are listening to them and their knowledge.”

Seeking Solutions



Syncrude president and CEO Scott Sullivan is calling upon scientists and bird experts to assist in understanding why a number of waterfowl perished at Syncrude in late October, despite a fully deployed bird deterrent system.

"We have invested much time and effort over the last two years to learn from the 2008 incident," says Scott. "We made many changes in improving our deterrent system. But this incident shows we have more work to do to determine further steps to improve our process."

Waterfowl were first observed during the evening of October 25th, landing at various locations, including roads and the Mildred Lake and Aurora settling basins. Landings were also reported throughout the region which was experiencing freezing rain.

Syncrude's waterfowl deterrent system had been in full operation when it occurred. In response to the incident, extra resources were deployed on the ponds using handheld devices, like air horns. At the time of publication, several hundred birds had been euthanized at the direction of regulatory officials, due to contact with bitumen floating on part of the tailings pond's surface.

Efforts were successful in moving birds away from the Aurora pond and other areas across site.

"Everyone in our organization is upset and concerned about this incident," says Scott. "We are committed to developing our oil sands leases responsibly, and know that the public expects the same."

Alberta Environment was contacted less than an hour after the birds were first noticed on a pond. Syncrude staff are cooperating with the government on their investigation, which includes an assessment of the impact that localized weather may have played in the event.

In response to the 2008 waterfowl incident, Syncrude had improved its bird deterrent system. This included year-round deployment of deterrents on areas not frozen, year-round staffing, deployment of shore-based noise cannons before spring break-up, and a radar-based system for researching migration patterns. Now, as part of the creative sentence from the event, Syncrude is investing \$1.3 million in a research project at the University of Alberta, which will examine bird migration and study the most effective deterrent technologies.

"We want to reassure stakeholders about how seriously we are taking this and the efforts that will be put towards understanding what happened," says Scott.

To find out how Syncrude is reclaiming its tailings ponds faster, see Boreal Builders on page 36.



Staff, including a field wildlife advisor, are engaged on a year-round basis to observe areas of open water and ensure bird deterrents are in place.

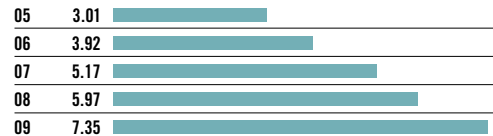
Community



Syncrude invested over \$1.375 million in Aboriginal community projects during 2009.

Investing in Aboriginal Communities

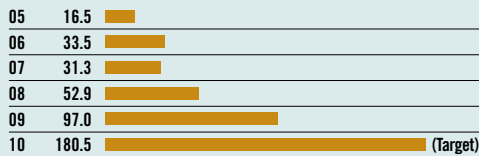
(cumulative since 2001) (\$ millions)



Syncrude has reclaimed close to 4,600 hectares to date and planted over five million tree and shrub seedlings. This is equivalent to over 20 per cent of our disturbed land.

Reclamation Expenditures

(\$ millions per year)



Environment



Business



Total Aboriginal business spending for the year was \$143 million.

The cumulative total for Syncrude business with First Nations- and Métis-owned companies since 1992 is now over \$1.4 billion.

Our Aboriginal business commitment

Syncrude is committed to providing opportunities for Aboriginal businesses to supply products or services to our operations. In evaluating proposals, if all other factors in a contract are equal, preference is given first to local Aboriginal businesses. We also encourage other contractors to employ Aboriginal people and subcontract work to Aboriginal businesses.

Contracts with Aboriginal Companies

(direct procurement since 1992) (cumulative \$ millions)



Interested in a Syncrude Scholarship? Since starting operations in 1978, Syncrude has provided ongoing financial support toward the educational endeavours of students throughout the province. Our goal is to continue building on this success and ensure even greater accessibility to financial resources in the future.

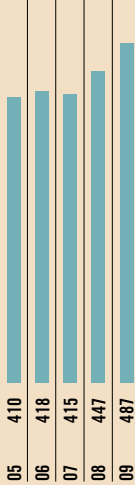
Through major endowments at several Alberta education institutions, students are able to access scholarships in a variety of fields, including engineering, nursing, education and environmental sciences. For a complete list of available scholarships, please visit syncrude.ca and click on Community—Syncrude Award and Scholarships. Many of the awards available give priority to Aboriginal and northern Alberta recipients.



Syncrude hired 87 Aboriginal people in 2009—the highest number in 13 years. Of our total workforce, approximately 8.6 per cent is of self-declared First Nations, Métis or Inuit descent.

Aboriginal Workforce

(number of employees)



Aboriginal Human Resources Scorecard

Syncrude Direct Workforce

	09	08	07	06	05
Total Aboriginal Employees (#)	487	447	415	418	410
Representation in:					
Total Workforce (%)	8.6	8.1	8.5	9.0	9.2
APT ¹ (% of total APT)	5.9	5.5	5.3	5.2	4.9
T&O ² (% of total O&T)	11.3	10.2	11.4	12.2	13.0
L&M ³ (% of total L&M)	5.9	5.6	6.0	6.0	4.9

Recruitment and Retention

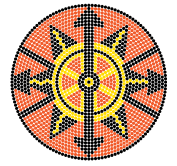
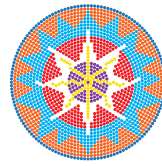
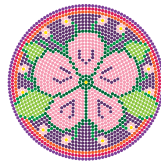
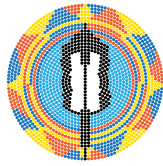
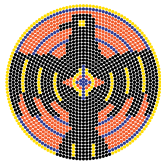
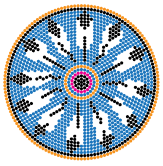
Aboriginal New Hires (% of all hires)	10.6	6.7	4.6	7.3	9.0
Aboriginal Attrition Rate (%)	9.8	11.9	9.8	9.8	8.0
Aboriginal Employee Service (# of years)	9.9	10.4	10.9	10.6	11.2

¹ Administration, professional and technical

² Trades and operators

³ Leadership and management

pathways



Our Aboriginal Relations Program

Syncrude's Aboriginal Relations program is focused on six key commitment areas: Corporate Leadership, Employment, Business Development, Education and Training, Community Development, and Environment.

The goals of our Aboriginal Relations program are to:

- meet Syncrude's regulatory consultation requirements
- develop relationships that support effective consultation
 - attract and retain qualified employees
- ensure our Aboriginal business development program provides value to all parties
 - gain support for Syncrude among local Aboriginal communities
- target Aboriginal community investment to areas that support Syncrude's business objectives
- ensure Aboriginal communities have adequate capacity to engage in all areas of oil sands development
- consider traditional land uses and traditional environmental knowledge in our environmental program.

Progress toward these goals is stewarded by Syncrude's Aboriginal Relations Steering Committee, whose mandate is to ensure that Syncrude delivers on its six key commitment areas. The committee includes senior managers and advisors from throughout Syncrude who meet monthly to guide and champion strategies to ensure positive outcomes for Aboriginal



The Aboriginal Relations Steering Committee:
(back row, left to right) Kara Flynn, Donelda Patterson, Bryan Cheater, Linda Bucke, Teena McDonald (secretary).
(Front row, left to right) Peter Read, Steve Jani, Brian Fairley, Fred Payne, Dr. Tom Lawley.
Missing: Bill Hayes, Steve Gaudet, Nonnie Roth.

stakeholders. An Aboriginal Relations team of five professionals supports the committee; they manage the day-to-day interactions and relationships with local stakeholders. A separate Aboriginal Employee Advisory Group also provides insight and stewardship to the commitment areas. This group consists of 11 Aboriginal employees.

The Aboriginal Relations Steering Committee

Bryan Cheater

Manager, Procurement

Brian Fairley

Vice President, Production

Kara Flynn

Manager, Public Affairs

Steve Gaudet

Manager, Environmental Affairs

Bill Hayes

Manager, Facilities

Dr. Tom Lawley

Chief Medical Officer

Donelda Patterson


Manager, Workplace Policies

Fred Payne

Senior Advisor, Regulatory Affairs

Peter Read

Manager, Mildred Lake Mining



Aboriginal
Relations Team:
(from left to right)
Maggie Grant, Steve Jani,
Belinda Gauvreau,
Linda Bucke.
Missing: Nonnie Roth
(meet Nonnie on page 20).

Our Aboriginal Relations Team

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Nonnie Roth

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Advisor
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syncrude.com
780.790.6408
(meet Nonnie on page 20)

Special thanks to Judy Best-Plamondon, our Stakeholder Relations Coordinator for the last two years, and all the best in your new role on Syncrude's Human Resources team.



Syncrude has played a proud role over the years in supporting individuals and communities to reach their goals.

A Note from Scott

The Syncrude *Aboriginal Review* has always been about celebrating achievement—from entrepreneurial triumphs to career advancement to community growth. And as one of the largest employers of Aboriginal people in Canada, Syncrude has played a proud role over the years in supporting individuals and communities to reach their goals.

To us, responsible oil sands development is about more than running a reliable operation. Quite simply, responsible development is about people. It's about ensuring we have strong relationships with our neighbours. It's about encouraging continual dialogue. And, as you've read in *Pathways*, it's about celebrating success.

Stakeholders have high expectations for our performance on all of these fronts. And rightly so. Since joining Syncrude this past summer, I've come to appreciate the complexity of the business and its diverse issues. It's also abundantly clear that everyone throughout the organization is committed to doing the right thing.

I'm confident that if we continue to work together with our neighbours, we will have many more inspiring stories to tell in the future.



Scott Sullivan
President and CEO



These organizations and initiatives recognize Syncrude for its expressed commitment and comprehensive programs to support Aboriginal people.

9 p.m. Johnny watches from the shore as the sun melts quickly in the horizon over the delta that has sustained him and his family for more than 60 years. The fading daylight brings out the see-your-breath crispness of autumn in northeastern Alberta. But neither the cold nor the end of the day bothers Johnny, who has seen enough sunsets to know his children and grandchildren will continue to experience the unique beauty of a place where the Canadian Shield meets boreal forest. "Fort Chip will be here for all time," he says.





Syncrude

www.syncrude.ca

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