

# pathways

SYNCRUDE CANADA LTD. ABORIGINAL REVIEW 2014

## ONE Woman's JOURNEY

In the spirit of understanding and reconciliation



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fosters dialogue  
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# WELCOME

## pathways

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**Front cover photo:** Christina Simpson  
portrait by George Webber

### Inside cover photo:

A close-up view of the art installation  
*Stations of Reconciliation*. See story on page 12.

### There are many different pathways to success.

It could be sitting around a campfire, preparing dry fish and listening to the wisdom of Elders. It could be studying for certification, a college diploma or university degree. Or it could be volunteering for a local grassroots organization.

There is no end to the remarkable successes and accomplishments among Aboriginal people in our region, our province and across our country. *Pathways* captures these stories and connects with First Nations and Métis people making positive contributions in their communities, 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, both 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.

These include: Business Development, Community Development, Education and Training, Employment, the Environment and Corporate Leadership. As a representation of our ongoing commitment to work with the local First Nations and Métis communities to create and share opportunity, *Pathways* is one among many initiatives meant to foster dialogue and celebrate shared achievements.

### 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.

### EMPLOYMENT

As one of the largest employers of Aboriginal people in Canada, Syncrude's goal is to create opportunities that enable First Nations, Métis and Inuit people to fully participate in all aspects of our operation.

### 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.

### ENVIRONMENT

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

### 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.

### 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.

## YOUR THOUGHTS

Through *Pathways*, we hope to bring you inspiring stories that capture the heart, spirit and success of Aboriginal people and communities. We invite you to share your opinion and tell us how we're doing. [www.syncrude.ca/pwfeedback](http://www.syncrude.ca/pwfeedback)

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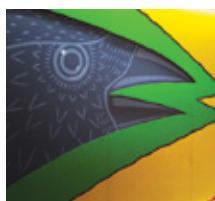
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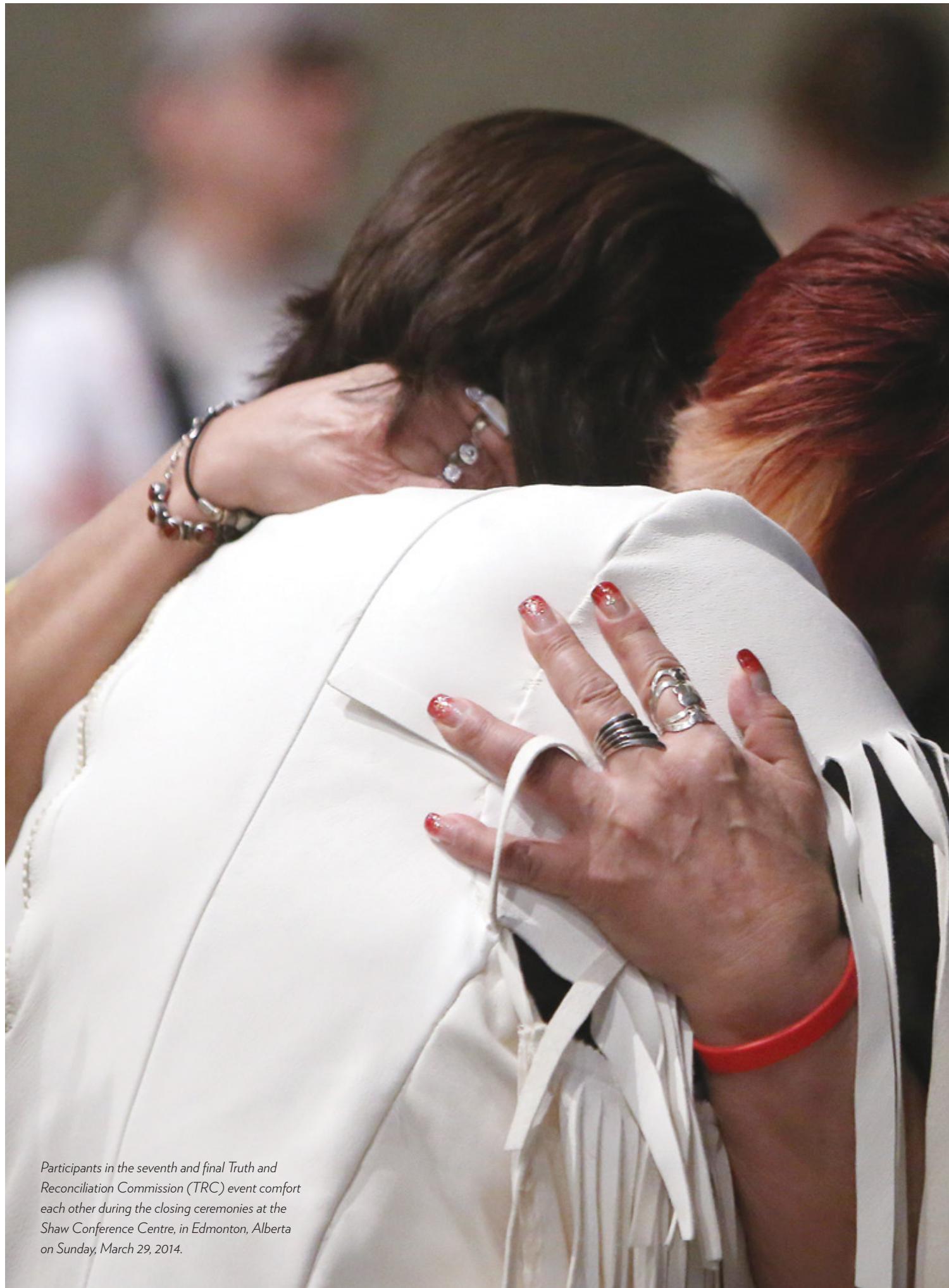
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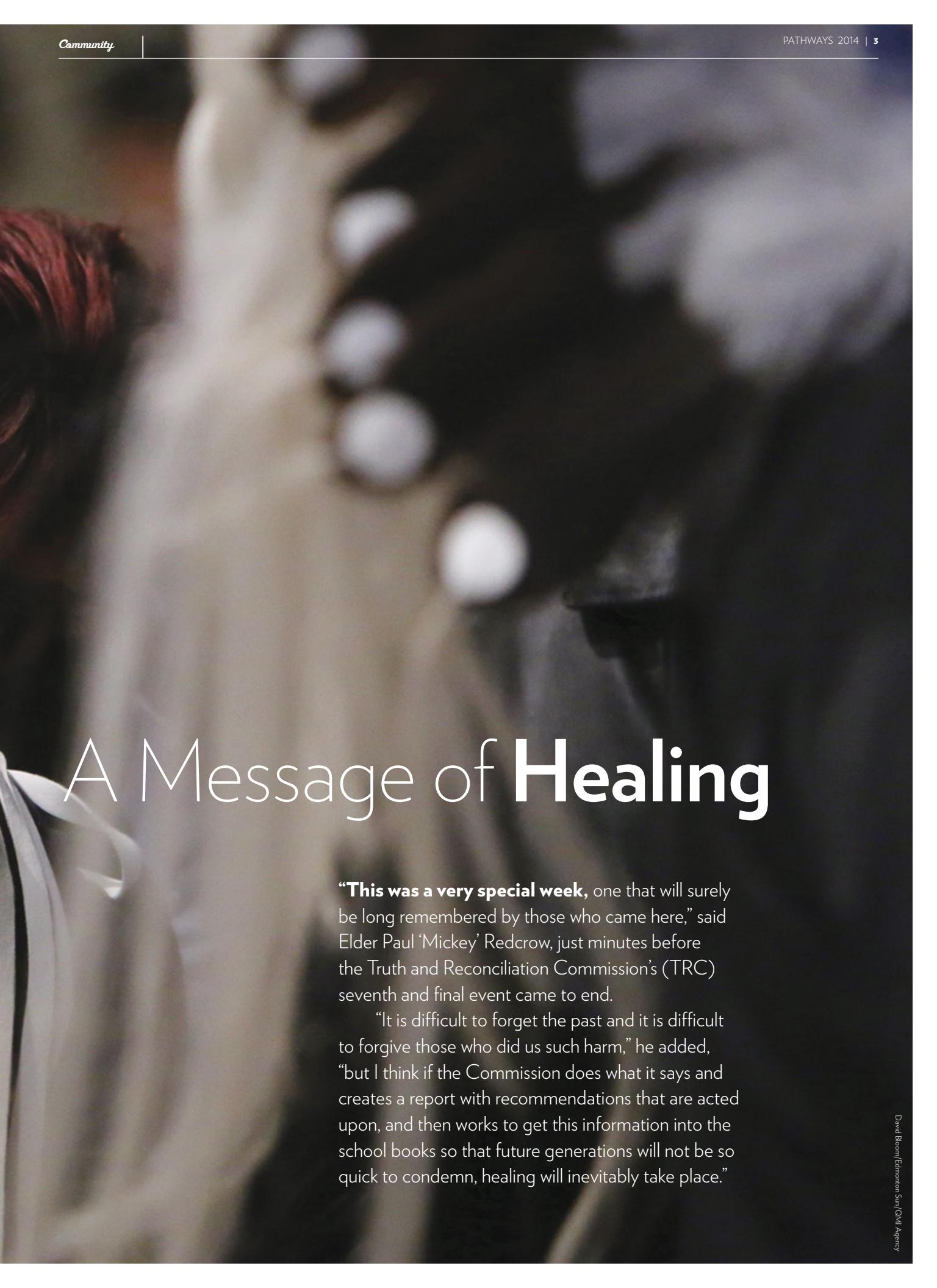
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*Participants in the seventh and final Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) event comfort each other during the closing ceremonies at the Shaw Conference Centre, in Edmonton, Alberta on Sunday, March 29, 2014.*



# A Message of Healing

**"This was a very special week,** one that will surely be long remembered by those who came here," said Elder Paul 'Mickey' Redcrow, just minutes before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) seventh and final event came to end.

"It is difficult to forget the past and it is difficult to forgive those who did us such harm," he added, "but I think if the Commission does what it says and creates a report with recommendations that are acted upon, and then works to get this information into the school books so that future generations will not be so quick to condemn, healing will inevitably take place."



Theodore and Morgan Fontaine (second and third from left) place items of healing into the Bentwood Box during the second day of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Alberta National Event at the Shaw Conference Centre in Edmonton, Alberta.

David Bloom/Edmonton Sun/QMI Agency

**An atmosphere of healing** was indeed present throughout the TRC's Alberta National Event, which took place in Edmonton from March 27<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>. The event was attended by more than 32,000 victims, conference participants, spectators, school children, religious leaders and dignitaries from every level of government—Aboriginal, provincial and federal. Rooms were filled to capacity with panels, sharing circles, film presentations, displays, listening circles and private statement resources.

"The Commission has travelled and visited with more than 560 communities. We will now sit down and prepare a report based on the foundation of the evidence, or the truth, as we have come to know it," said Lead Commissioner the Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair.

The immediate plan is to meet with interest groups to determine what road to take when it comes to reconciliation. The Commission will offer recommendations on ways to educate the general public about what happened as a result of the Indian Residential School system. It will also offer recommendations to improve social programs and conditions for Canada's Indigenous population.

Syncrude was a major supporter of the TRC event, donating \$100,000 towards Education Day, which guided over 2,000 school children through

insightful learning programs. Kara Flynn, Vice President of Government and Public Affairs, offered the company's statement of reconciliation during the event.

"The residential school era is an important part of our country's history, and all Canadians, regardless of heritage, need to understand it," said Kara. "As we move forward, the relationship between Canada's corporate sector and our Aboriginal stakeholders will grow, and Aboriginal people will be, as they should, full participants in all aspects of Canadian society. This week's event is an important

step in our journey together. It is bringing us toward a shared understanding of our history, and the lessons learned are informing the things we must do to progress as a whole."

Today, around 80,000 survivors live in Canada. The final event enabled many of those who live in Alberta to share their own experiences and stories. Honourary Witness Chief Robert Joseph called the event a phenomenal success. "It has enabled

**"Canadian society has finally been exposed to the truth and they are listening, they are acting and they are changing their attitudes."**



## What is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission?

The five-year, \$60 million Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established in 2007 as part of the settlement of a class-action lawsuit that sought compensation and justice from the government-funded, church-operated Indian Residential School system.

More than 130 schools operated across Canada from the mid-1870s until the last school closed in 1996. During this era, more than 160,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children were taken from their parents and placed in these schools. They were forbidden to speak their languages, or practice their

cultures, and often suffered from physical, mental, emotional and sexual abuse.

The TRC's mandate was to learn the truth about what happened in the residential schools and to inform all Canadians about their findings. The Commission relied on records held by those who operated and funded the schools, testimony from officials of the institutions that operated the schools, and experiences reported by survivors, their families, communities and others personally affected by the residential school experience and its impacts.

The TRC, led by commissioners the Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair, Chief Willie Littlechild and Dr. Marie Wilson, spoke to thousands of survivors of the residential school era throughout Canada.

Canadians from every culture and every walk of life to gain a better understanding of what our people faced during the residential school era. I was very pleased to see so many non-Aboriginal Canadians attend this magnificent event; it is a definite indication that we are becoming a nation of brothers, citizens from all cultures working in unison and in friendship."

Chief Joseph praised the large turnouts at the hearings in Vancouver and Edmonton as being the catalysts for success. As Ambassador for Reconciliation Canada and the Indian Residential School Survivors Society, as well as Chairman of the national Assembly of First Nations Elders Council, he lauded the efforts of the various governments for their input and dedication to making Canada a better place for all to live.

"We all need to step up to the plate to encourage new dialogue, to find new and innovative ways to move ahead in harmony and understanding," said Chief Joseph. "Canadian society has finally been exposed to the truth and they are listening, they are acting and they are changing their attitudes. It is wonderful to see this change take place. It is just a matter of time before we will all be working together, seeking common goals and enabling one another to realize our dreams."



*Following the closing ceremonies of the seventh and final Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) event, participants march from the Shaw Conference Centre down Jasper Avenue to the Alberta Legislature, in Edmonton.*

**Circle photo above:** The Bentwood Box is seen during the second day of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Alberta National Event. Healing items were placed inside the box during the hearings.

CHRISTINA SIMPSON

# ONE Woman's JOURNEY

In the spirit of understanding and reconciliation



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Christina holds a photo of her  
Ama Celine Flett (third from left), and  
her grandmothers (from left) Annie Piché,  
Agnes Piché and Maryann Bruno.

**Top left:** About 150,000 First Nations,  
Métis and Inuit children were separated  
from their homes and communities  
to attend residential schools.

**Bottom left:** Convent of Holy Angels  
Indian Residential School,  
Fort Chipewyan, Alberta



I'm so glad I had the opportunity to attend the 7<sup>th</sup> Truth and Reconciliation event held in Edmonton. I went with the idea that I would go and honour the people who are not here today and to see the outcome of a very dark, dreadful part of our Canadian history. Little did I know this was yet another part of my healing journey!



“It was a rude awakening.  
I was not Sauterelle.  
I was not Christina.  
I was now #11.”

In particular, one action touched me to the core. It was a gift presented by British Columbia's Deputy Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, Peter Cunningham, to place in the Bentwood Box. The gift itself was a beautiful cedar box containing a flash drive surrounded by a braid of sweet grass. The flash drive contained information on children who had died from 1870 to 1994.

If I had the opportunity to add to the flash drive, I would have shared stories of my own family.

I honour Uncle Pierre Flett and Auntie Annie Flett. They went to residential school. I don't know how many years they served, but they were both rushed separately to an Edmonton hospital for undisclosed causes. Nobody can tell us where they were buried. I still wonder today if Auntie Annie was buried with her baby.

I honour my mother who gave me life and placed me in the safest place she knew when she was no longer able to care for me.

I honour my Ama ("Mom" in Dene), a gentle, quiet woman who raised me. I do not recall her telling me she loved me but she showed it in her own way. She too was a survivor of the residential school. She always said "Commem" (it is ok) when I asked her hard emotional questions she would not have been able to verbalize.

I honour my great-grandfather Alexandre Laviolette. When he signed Treaty 8 in 1899, was this his vision for his next seven generations?

I did however have the opportunity to honour my brother Ada (Adam). He was born on March 28<sup>th</sup>, 1951, and he died on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2006, at the age of 55. He took his healing off the land. He loved to hunt and provide for his family by sharing food and berries. He taught my son to fish, hunt and trap. I saw the joy on his face when he brought me fresh moose meat and shared with me what had happened on his hunting trip. The only time he was able to verbally say he loved me was in the wee hours of the morning with a few beers under his belt. By honouring him, I was no longer keeping quiet.

The conference brought back memories of my own residential path and journey, which I walked with my sister Irene since the age of five.

Sauterelle, as I was known before I entered the mission, asked my Ama to go to the residential school because I was the only one left at home when fall came and the children had to return to the mission. I found it lonely at home without my brother and sisters. I was so happy to go to the convent. I hopped along the shores of Lake Athabasca to go into the residential school.

It was a rude awakening. I was not Sauterelle. I was not Christina. I was now #11.

#11 quickly learned to survive in that system. I learned to abide by the rules and regulations. I learned the ABCs, 123s and read books like *Dick and Jane*. Books were my escape from the real world. I learned to knit, sew and complete tasks on time—ensuring I did it right the first time. The results of having to redo it were too painful!



Provincial Archives of Alberta A7455



Glenbow Archives NA-33396



Library and Archives Canada E01980286

*More than 130 Indian Residential Schools operated across the country between the mid-1870s to 1996, when the last school shut its doors.*



“My mandate today is  
to inspire reconciliation  
in a good way. I do  
not believe this is a  
**First Nations’** problem  
to be solved. This is  
a Canadian issue.”



It was hard not to be able to talk to my brother for 10 months out of a year. We could not talk to each other even if we were in the same room on a Sunday night watching movies. I would quickly glance over to catch a glimpse of Ada in the lineup of small boys. I was glad when I spotted him because I knew he was okay at least for the next hour-and-a-half.

After leaving the residential school we had to learn to survive in the outside world. I was a broken, lost girl, and my spirit was badly stomped on.

At the event, I heard about the loss of language, culture, dignity and, above all, the loss of "voice." That message was repeated many times. I heard about sexual abuse and the physical pain endured just because we were "Indigenous people" and the missionaries with the support of the government were going to take that out of us.

I witnessed the strength, courage and resilience of the survivors as they stood and told their stories.

I was touched by the presentation of a group of five students who shared their views on how to go forward on reconciliation. They spoke so eloquently and their voices were strong as they took turns speaking. They stated they make up 31 per cent of today's population but are 100 per cent of the future.

I cried when I sat in a sharing circle with a father and son. The father shared his story first. The son stated he took so much for granted growing up. He walked in two worlds—the white

and the First Nation. He said his father was always his hero. He was his "Hulk" and today his father is "his heart!"

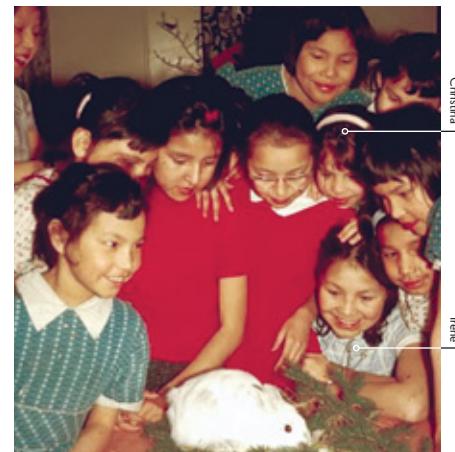
I smiled...my oldest son always said to me over the years, "Mom, you are my heart!"

I applauded along with thousands of survivors when the announcement was made that it was going to become mandatory for this part of Canadian history to be included in the curriculum from Kindergarten to

Grade 12. Although I applauded, I also questioned how someone can teach what they only heard about and read in text books. I know the girls from my generation who are teachers today can teach it, because they walked that path. I believe my sister can teach this era along with the tipi pole values in her classroom in Fort Chipewyan.

My mandate today is to inspire reconciliation in a good way. I do not believe this is a First Nations' problem to be solved. This is a Canadian issue. This is an opportunity to make it better for the generations to come. I believe together we can make a difference in the spirit of healing and reconciliation!

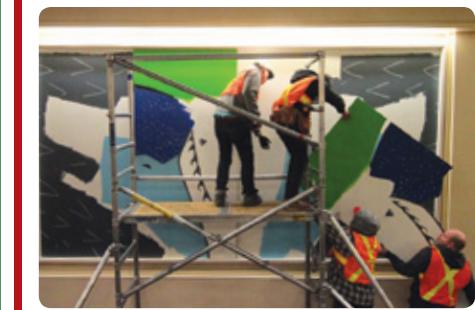
*Christina (Christine) Simpson is a member of the Mikisew Cree First Nation, and resides in Fort McMurray, Alberta. She currently works for Syncrude as a Stakeholder Relations Representative. We thank Christina for sharing her story with the readers of Pathways.*



**Left:** Christina and her great-granddaughter Selena Christine.

**Top:** Christina at home with her family and grandchildren. From left to right: Corinna, Savannah, Mia, Adrian Ralph and great-granddaughter Selena Christine.

**Bottom:** Christina and her sister Irene discover a rabbit at the residential school.



# UNDERGROUND INSIGHT

## In a meaningful response to decades of criticism

by Aboriginal groups, a more beautiful act of real-world reconciliation could hardly be found than at Edmonton's Grandin Light Rail Transit (LRT) station. A new, large-scale work called *Stations of Reconciliation* by Aaron Paquette has boosted an older, monumental mural into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

First unveiled on its west wall in 1989, Sylvie Nadeau's portrait of the work of Roman Catholic Bishop Grandin was intended as a portrait of love and cultural hybridity—but many inside and outside Native communities took understandable issue with the depiction of Oblate Grandin and a Grey Nun holding a Native baby, its parents nowhere in sight. This was an especially difficult symbol of history hanging in a busy public space. Sylvie's 80-foot painting also depicted Hudson's Bay blankets being traded, another contentious symbol.

Ironically, some artists, like Aaron, had a fondness for it, anyway. "As a kid, no one talked about residential schools. There was a deep sense of shame. So for me, my experience with that mural was a positive one because, oh wow, they're actually showing Indigenous people in public artwork," notes the successful Métis painter, author and community organizer, who recently curated a TREP exhibit for the Art Gallery of Alberta sponsored by Syncrude.

In spring 2014, the mural, originally commissioned by La Francophonie Jeunesse de l'Alberta, was revisited by the organization, the City's Aboriginal Relations Office, Native groups and the Edmonton Arts Council. Rather than decommission Sylvie's work, it was decided Aaron would work with her and create a response on the east wall—turning the platform into the nexus of an important, nuanced conversation. The central idea: it's better to talk about history than ignore it.

Aaron's new layered wood painting glows with alluring animal imagery, symbols of life and reproduction, as well as realistic Aboriginal pictographs in a cave setting suggested during consultations with First Nations' Elders. These intentionally match the cavernous roof of the station, and Aaron imagines the work being stumbled upon by future archaeologists, going full circle to the current 10,000 years of local history. "We wanted to show this place, now called Edmonton, has a beautiful and layered history that far overwhelms the 'official' 100 years," says Aaron. Local artist Nickelas Johnson helped him cut out and assemble the gorgeous puzzle pieces on the wall along with excited city workers.

Its central white buffalo—a creature found in symbolic dreams of Big Bear—directly faces Sylvie's works, numerous animals, including the Firebird of rebirth, spoking out from the sides. Aaron and Sylvie designed circle drums on either side of their work, bringing divergent styles together. In these, Aaron intentionally used Hudson's Bay hues. Indeed, first seeing these colours in Native designs, the company's fabricators used them in their blankets to appeal to the Indigenous people.

"Most Canadians, as we learn more about our history, our relationship with things we've taken for granted has changed," says Aaron. "Our relationship with even that mural changed, not just in Indigenous circles. Over the decades it became vilified, which is a telling look at how we form our narratives."

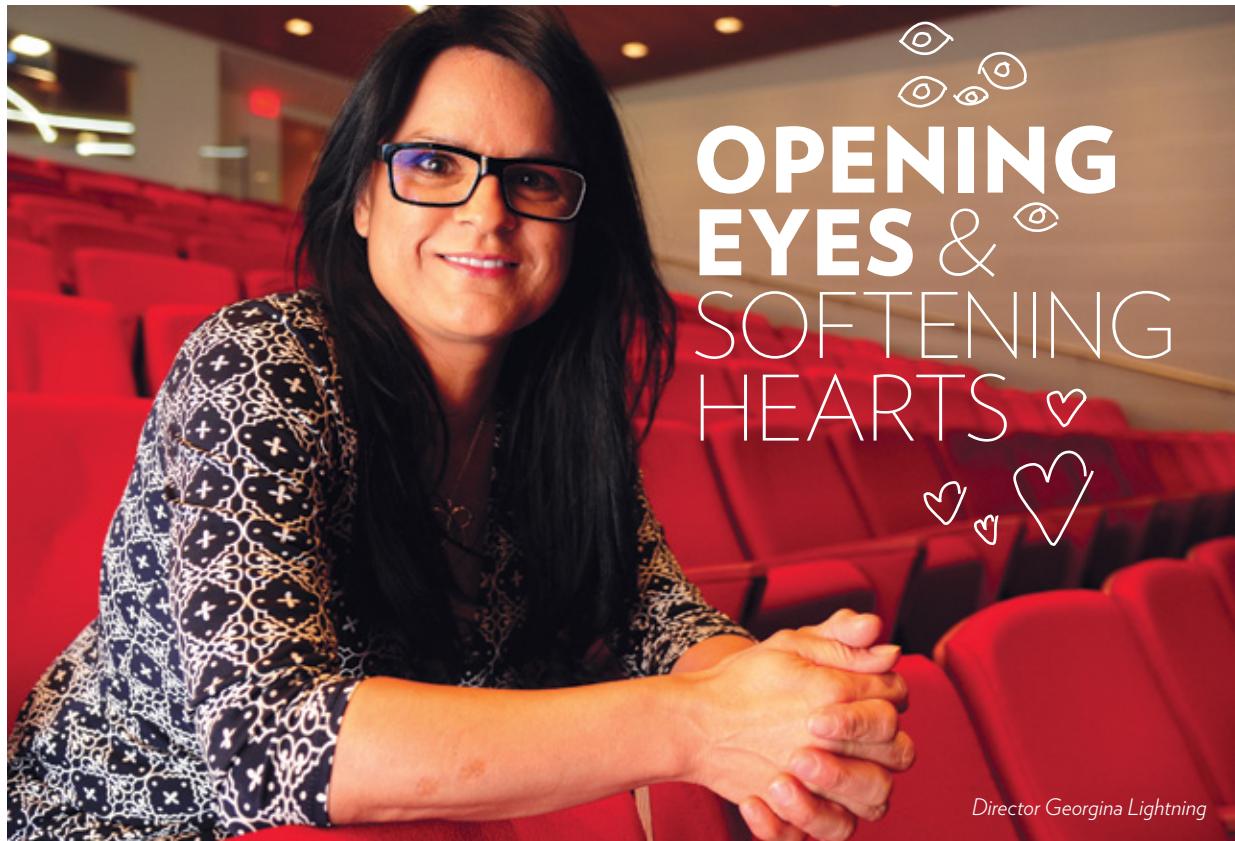
"The worry that struck me in the middle of the night is it could cause people to become complacent—'OK, we've fixed that up.' But really what it's done—I've haunted Facebook and Twitter—is people are now having these discussions. And people who feel 'Get over it! It's in the past!'—they now get the sense this is an ongoing conversation about a current event. And if we don't talk, we don't heal."

Artists Aaron Paquette and Sylvie Nadeau collaborated to bring the essence of reconciliation to Edmonton's Grandin LRT station.

**"Most Canadians, as we learn more about our history, our relationship with things we've taken for granted, has changed."**

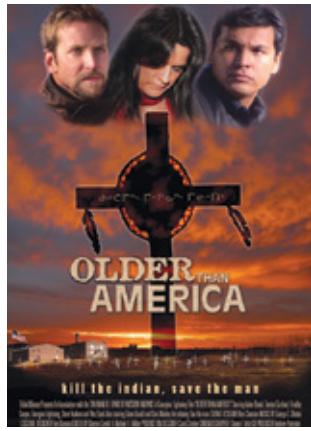
Aaron Paquette





Edmonton Journal: Bruce Edwards

Director Georgina Lightning



Older Than America has been honoured with over 20 awards since its release. It is available for download on iTunes and Netflix.

**“...what we need to do now is to figure out a way that we can come together to heal.”** ❤

**On March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014**, just 10 days before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) held its final event, a public screening of the film *Older Than America* had many attendees learning for the first time about the now-defunct Indian Residential School system, and the long-standing effects it has had on the children and families within Canada's Indigenous communities.

Directed by Georgina Lightning and starring well-known actors Adam Beach, Tantoo Cardinal and Bradley Cooper, the film has earned more than 20 awards since its 2008 release. The screening was presented in partnership with the City of Edmonton and the Art Gallery of Alberta.

“I made this movie to encourage others and to promote discussion about the truths of the past, about what really happened in those schools, about the effects that still linger today,” notes Georgina. “I would like to see society soften the harsh judgments that exist today, particularly when it comes to social issues such as broken families and addictions—these are the lingering results of the residential school era.”

The film offers an uncanny look into the past through the lead character Rain, who is guided by a spirit to uncover the extraordinary

efforts taken by a Catholic priest to ensure that her mother could never tell others about the atrocities that took place in the Indian Residential School she was forced to attend as a child.

“Tonight’s event wasn’t just for Aboriginal people,” noted Georgina in an interview following the screening. “All Canadians have to deal with the legacy of the Indian Residential Schools, and I am personally quite pleased to see that so many non-Aboriginal people came here this evening to get a glimpse of this sad reality. I hope that this event will inspire people of all cultures and from all walks of life to support and encourage both social and political participation.”

A panel discussion followed the film presentation and included Georgina, TRC Commissioners Chief Willie Littlechild and Dr. Marie Wilson, governance and education management professional Lewis Cardinal, and clinical traumatologist and psychologist Jacqui Linder.

“What you saw here tonight,” noted Georgina, thanking the sold-out crowd for their interest and participation, “is real; what we need to do now is to figure out a way that we can come together to heal.”

# A Lake of Living Culture



**“Our youth are encouraged to participate in a variety of hands-on programs that not only offer opportunities for personal growth, but also help to maintain and nurture the community and everyone in it.”**

**Roxanne Marcel**

ACFN Elders & Youth Lodge Manager



**A strong and viable society is one that embraces cultural awareness,**

maintains traditional values and encourages ongoing participation. Often, this is achieved by providing meaningful instruction through programs and initiatives that benefit everyone in the community.

“The Athabasca Chipewyan First Nations’ Uncle Fred Elders & Youth Lodge is committed to doing just that,” explains Roxanne Marcel, a former Mikisew Cree First Nation Chief and currently the manager of the popular facility. “Our youth are encouraged to participate in a variety of hands-on programs that not only offer opportunities for personal growth, but also help to maintain and nurture the community and everyone in it.”

The lodge hosts a variety of unique programs. These include bannock-making, hunting, cooking, preparing dry fish, drying and preserving meat, and harvesting, skinning and butchering the moose and caribou that guarantee the community’s ability to sustain itself during the long winter months.

“Each year we send out a letter seeking corporate sponsors to help us reach our goals,” explains Roxanne. “We are very pleased to note that Syncrude has agreed to help us fund our annual whitefish harvest this year and in doing so is helping us to achieve our goals. Their support will help more ACFN members to better understand the importance of fishing, it will enable our Elders to utilize their knowledge of land and animals while they work with our younger members, and it will help to ensure that

our traditional lands are utilized by our youth who will help to hunt and fish, and prepare for winter.”

The annual fish harvest is an important event and one that, in one way or another, helps everyone in the community.

“Our youth get hands-on experience and gain greater insight into their heritage, our Elders are able to share their knowledge and their stories, and the entire community shares in the harvest,” notes Roxanne. “Every home in the community will receive an equal share of the fish that are caught by the youth and the Elders during the five days they spend on the lake.”

The community also shares in the annual caribou hunt and whenever hunters are fortunate enough to bag a moose or other game.

“Elders and youth working together helps to create strong bonds and better understanding of one another and enables us to promote Dene culture as ‘living culture’ rather than relegating it to a thing of the past,” says Roxanne. “The Elders & Youth Lodge is an important venue and one that strives to enhance the knowledge of our youth, and supports and increases the roles that Elders play in our community.”

“Elders are a viable and important language resource for the community and their role in all cultural revitalization and retention activities is critical. To maintain a strong and vibrant community, it is imperative that culture and tradition play important roles in our daily lives—we meet our goals by ensuring that Elders and youth are able to work together to reach common goals.”



# A QUEST FOR UNDERSTANDING

## **Dr. Marie Smallface Marule's passion for Indigenous**

**peoples** has taken her across oceans, into classrooms and through trials that have built her character and dismantled divides.

Marie is a member of the Blood Tribe of the Blackfoot Confederacy and a renowned educator. She has dedicated her career to Aboriginal education as the founder of the First Nations Higher Education Commission of Alberta and as the former president of Red Crow College for more than two decades.

She taught at several universities and served as the executive director of the National Indian Brotherhood and as chief administrator of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples.

Her victories in life, however, were often hard-won.

"The biggest obstacle in my early life was racism, and I found it very difficult to deal with, particularly when I was a young university student, but I knew I couldn't let it destroy me, and it didn't," she says. "It was the racism I experienced in university that led me to Africa, because I wanted to experience what colonized people felt when they were decolonized. It ended up being one of the most impactful seasons in my life."

She travelled with CUSO (Canadian University Service Overseas) as a volunteer in community development and adult literacy in Zambia, where she spent four years in the late 1960s during a time of independence from British colonization.

This experience fueled her passion for the pursuit of human rights.

After returning, she became the executive assistant to Grand Chief George Manuel, who would become the single most influential mentor in her life.

Chief Manuel was instrumental in bringing about the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and was president of the North American Indian Brotherhood.

"He was a remarkable person—my mentor and my inspiration," says Marie. "He was also a very humble person and a good listener with a way of engaging people and developing a rapport with them. He was very, very committed to the Indigenous people of Canada."

Marie soon became the executive director of the National Indian Brotherhood, the forerunner of the Assembly of First Nations.

"One of the other most fulfilling accomplishments in my life was helping to coordinate the first international conference on Indigenous people," she says. "After an initial meeting in Guyana in 1973, we presented the conference in Port Alberni, B.C., in 1975." The conference hosted delegates from 19 countries.

In addition to all her many accomplishments, Marie received the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women's *Dorothy MacDonald Leadership Award* earlier this spring.

The award, sponsored by Syncrude, is presented to an Aboriginal woman in a leadership role who advocates for Aboriginal women and sets a positive example.

## **"Leaders must have a clear understanding of history and the forces that are impacting our world."**

Marie's commitment to Aboriginal education is evidence of her belief in investing in the future of leadership.

"Leaders must have a clear understanding of history and the forces that are impacting our world," she says. "Travel is important since people unfamiliar with our country or our world can't fully appreciate the dynamics and influences that create our circumstances, but education is crucial, and that is why I have invested so much of myself in the development of Red Crow College."

Red Crow Community College was established in 1986 as a modest, First Nations adult education centre and has since evolved into a complete post-secondary institution offering diploma and degree programs.

It is also now home to an academic library with more than 15,000 items in its collection focusing on First Nations.

"We must learn from the heroes in our community who have gone before us and we must be committed to gaining understanding of the influences on the world around us," says Marie. "I believe in learning, and I believe that by supporting each other we can create lasting, meaningful change."



# RISK-TAKER, DREAM MAKER

**Marie Delorme gives gifts, shares gifts...and even sells them too.**

**S**he is the founder and president of the **Imagination Group of Companies**, which includes Nation Imagination—The Aboriginal Gifting Company, and notably the first Indigenous-owned firm to franchise its operation nationally.

Through her life journey, Marie Delorme has acquired a wealth of experiences. She shares her knowledge through her company's national consulting practice, which engages with Indigenous communities, governments, corporations and educational institutions to help them address the spectrum of challenges that leaders face.

She also gives of herself by investing in the futures of the next generation of leaders, innovators and world-changers. This was a lesson she learned from her parents.

"My parents raised their children to understand that we have a responsibility to give back to the world," says Marie, the recipient of the 2014 Indspire Business and Commerce Award. "Although we were not a family of means, they were generous to all who crossed their doorway."

She believes that walking alongside youth can unlock potential that will lead to true greatness that will not only benefit the individual, but will transform communities with impact across cultures.

"When young people are guided and mentored by adults who nurture their ambitions, they are given the gift of self-knowledge and courage," says Marie. "They understand it is important to achieve in life, to draw lessons from life's challenges and to always put others before themselves."

It was her involvement and engagement in her son's future that actually altered her own.

Marie's son, Colby, was an entrepreneur long before she ventured down the self-employment path, and she says her son has provided tremendous encouragement and support.

"He is a wonderful, talented and generous man who has been a mentor and an inspiration in so many ways," she says. "We have a great responsibility to our children—to ensure they enter adulthood with self-esteem, with respect for others and with a social conscience. I like to think that I had some small role to play in who my son is today."

Marie's desire to protect and nurture future entrepreneurs is evident, as the third company she operates under the Imagination Group is a service that enables artists and cultural artisans to protect their copyrighted material through an on-line registry, cataloguing database and a widely recognized seal of authenticity.

She understands that walking into the uncertainty of entrepreneurship requires the support of peers as well as a great deal of courage.

Marie herself left an executive position with the country's second-largest telecommunications company 15 years ago to launch the Imagination Group.

"I did not have any entrepreneurial background and the large corporate world really doesn't prepare a person for the myriad realities of running one's own business," she says. "Leaving the security of 26 years as a wage-taker involved significant risk."

It was a risk, however, that has resulted in significant reward.

Marie has received numerous awards including the Métis Nation of Alberta Entrepreneurial Leadership Award, the Alberta Centennial Medal and Canada's Top 100 Most Powerful Women. She serves on the boards of the RCMP Foundation and United Way of Calgary and is an advisor to two universities. Her research focuses on inter-cultural leadership.

Marie says integrity, respect for all, a great attitude and a sense of humour are all hallmarks of a great leader.

"In my first management position, a woman who was retiring gave me the best advice of my career," says Marie. "She said, 'You must perform to stand out but, at the end of the day, which comes for all of us, no one will remember you for the awards, the report, or the career accomplishments. They will only remember how you made them feel in your presence.'"

*Syncrude is a proud sponsor of the Indspire Foundation and congratulates Marie on her award.*



**"We have a great responsibility to our children—to ensure they enter adulthood with self-esteem, with respect for others and with a social conscience."**



# Leading for CHANGE

**CCAB President and CEO well-versed  
in business, community and industry**

An Anishinaabe from Thunder Bay, JP Gladu is a member of the Sand Point First Nation. As the President and CEO of the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, he connects Aboriginal communities with industry.

## **"An Anishinaabe from Thunder Bay**

whose father and grandfather were loggers." The first words the President and CEO of the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB), Jean Paul (JP) Gladu uses to describe himself reflect the importance of his community, culture and traditions.

JP grew up with a deep connection to his land, one that he holds today. "I spent all the time I could either hunting, fishing or camping, and still do with my dad and now my daughter, when I can. My love of the land was passed on to me from my parents," explains JP. "Respect for the land has always been in me. It refreshes my spirit and reminds me of why I do what I do."

Following in his family's footsteps, it was natural that JP would pursue a Forestry diploma straight out of high school. But it was his work with the First Nations Forestry Program where

he really found his passion. "I had a job travelling to First Nations across Ontario doing on-reserve forestry work. That's when I fell in love with being in and working for my community," he says. "Because of this, I questioned whether being a Conservation Officer would be the career for me, or if I should take a different path."

He wanted to become more engaged in leading real change in Aboriginal communities. "The challenge is when all Aboriginal people are painted with the same brush. We all have different backgrounds and aspirations," explains JP.

For more than 20 years, JP has had his hand in every sector in our country, including provincial governments and the federal government, industry, community-based groups, Aboriginal organizations, non-profits and environmental organizations. While doing so, he's



“Respect for the land has always been in me. It refreshes my spirit and reminds me of why I do what I do.”



**“I think it’s really important that industry and our Aboriginal communities find a place of respect and reciprocity, which is the foundation for meaningful relationships.”**

earned university degrees, including an Executive MBA from Queens. “The CCAB opportunity is unique because it looks at it all. We are an Aboriginal-based organization, but many of our members are industry and Aboriginal companies around the table improving our relationships and building business.”

Having invested more than \$2 billion in local Aboriginal businesses to date, Syncrude shares JP’s values. Syncrude has received the highest level of accreditation in CCAB’s national Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) program five times for its ongoing commitment in areas of employment, community investment, business development and community engagement.

“We’re all in the landscape together. Anywhere in this country where development is happening, it’s at our back door,” JP says.

“I think it’s really important that industry and our Aboriginal communities find a place of respect and reciprocity, which is the foundation for meaningful relationships. The fact that Syncrude continues to raise the bar in those relationships is a testament to its long-term commitment.”

He believes the lessons being learned in oil sands development are ones that could apply in other parts of Canada. “We have communities that were on the periphery of resource development now integral to resource development,” he says. “I see companies in the Fort McMurray region playing a vital role in mentorship as leaders. We have to ask ourselves: ‘How do we recreate the incredible work from Fort McMurray in other parts of the country?’ I’m optimistic about the future and believe our socioeconomic circumstance is definitely brighter.”

# MAKING WAVES

**When Janet Alook enrolled her two young boys in swimming lessons to be safe around water, she had no idea the positive impact it would have on all their lives.**

"I grew up around water and know the joys and dangers it brings," says Janet, a Syncrude process operator. "I wanted my boys to be safe and gain this valuable life skill."

Her sons, Josh and Jeffrey, thrived in the pool, leading Janet to become a volunteer with the Fort McMurray Manta Swim Club.

Looking back on one of her first volunteer experiences, Janet recalls sharing a sense of solidarity when the organization's future was in question and the community rallied to support it. "The Mantas have been in Fort McMurray since 1971, but around 20 years ago the organization faced some challenges. We all pitched in to fundraise—we wrapped presents in the Peter Pond Mall, delivered Sears catalogues, ran bingos and did whatever we could to help."

As the club raised money to continue offering competitive and pre-competitive programs, a ripple effect was taking place.

"As the boys went on to compete, it was all about achieving their personal best. They talked non-stop about how to improve to get a better time," says Janet, a member of the Big Stone First Nation. "As they grew in swimming, they grew in their studies. It really carried over. The skills they learned, like time management, improved their academics. I'm a firm believer that academics and athletics go hand in hand."

To help Janet and others in their efforts, Syncrude offers a program that financially supports organizations for which employees volunteer—the Good Neighbours Program.

"The program helps us very much," says Janet. "Through the volunteer and busing grants, we're able to help fund out-of-town trips especially. I've been at Syncrude for 27 years and am proud that it recognizes my community contributions."

More than 20 years after getting involved with the Swim Club, Janet's boys are both grown and off to post-secondary school. They both continue to swim, one competitively, and Janet herself can be found at the pool helping the next generation of athletes.

"I've been volunteering for 23 years and it's priceless to see them reach their goals. I've formed some life-long friendships here and do what I can to give back."



**"As they grew in swimming,  
they grew in their studies.  
It really carried over.  
The skills they learned,  
like time management,  
improved their academics."**

# A CHAMPION FOR OLYMPIC DREAMS

**Chief Vern Janvier regularly dips into his pocket** to sponsor the Boy Scouts, school programs, youth hockey teams and Nick (The Promise) Ring, a combatant from Calgary who participates in the Ultimate Fighting Championships.

So when a friend learned Jamaica's Olympic bobsled team was in desperate financial straits, he forwarded the information to Janvier, Chief of the Chipewyan Prairie Dene First Nation and owner of C.P. Services.

"They asked if I was interested and I mean, who wouldn't be?" says Chief Janvier, a fan of the bobsled flick *Cool Runnings*, the 1993 comedy loosely based around the Jamaican team's journey to the Olympics in Calgary.

"Then I had to go to my management team and tell them I had a crazy idea."

"My business manager got this funny look on his face and said: 'Vern, Jamaica?'"

Chief Janvier then travelled to the Jamaican bobsledders training centre in Wyoming and signed a four-year, \$140,000 sponsorship agreement with the team.

After qualifying for their first Olympics since 2002, the Jamaican two-man bobsledders announced they were so short of cash that it was unlikely they would participate in the Games, held earlier this year in Russia.

The Jamaica Olympic Association and Sochi 2014 Organizing Committee then

stepped in to help pay travel costs, and the team quickly raised \$120,000 from business sponsors and individuals.

Jamaican bobsledders have competed in five Olympics since 1988, with a best finish of 14<sup>th</sup> in 1994—ahead of teams from Canada, the U.S., Russia and France. They hoped to improve on that this time around, but instead came in 29<sup>th</sup> place.

Their bobsled had already been shipped to Europe by the time Chief Janvier paid them a visit, so he didn't get to take a joyride with Winston Watts, a 47-year-old participating in his fourth Winter Games. But he enjoyed chatting with the team and was inspired by its spirit and dedication.

"These guys are amazing, fast and strong," Chief Janvier says.

Curious, he asked when the brakes are applied to a bobsled.

"They said, 'Yo man, you don't put your brakes on until the bottom of the hill!'"

*This article is reproduced from the Edmonton Journal with permission. Story by Marty Klinkenberg.*



Jamaican Bobsled team poses with Chief Vern Janvier. Left to right: crewman Marvin Dixon, reserve crewman Wayne Blackwood, Chief Vern Janvier, bobsled driver Winston Watts. (Courtesy Chipewyan Prairie Dene First Nation/Scott Hallenberg)

**"My business manager got this funny look on his face and said: 'Vern, Jamaica?'"**

# STARS ON ICE

**Keeping the sticks on the ice and helmets tightly fastened** was only part of the plan at the Greater Strides Hockey Academy held earlier this year. The camp also aimed to teach some lessons that can be useful off the ice too.

**“The kids had all different skill levels but everyone fit in, with help from the excellent coaches.”**

Over 110 First Nation and Métis youth from across the region came together to lace up their skates in Fort McKay from March 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> to attend the hockey camp. Fort McKay resident Deanna Simard brought her three boys, ages five, nine and 11, to the camp and is already looking forward to the next one.

“It was an amazing opportunity for the kids. Hockey is such an expensive sport, and sometimes it’s just not affordable for families,” says Deanna. “The kids had all different skill levels but everyone fit in, with help from the excellent coaches. From meeting new friends to the healthy lunches provided, the camp was great.”

This year marked the Greater Strides Hockey Academy Foundation’s third year in operation, and founder Brantt Myhres looks forward to bringing the camp back to the region. Youth ages five to 17 can join the Academy returning in October 2014 and March 2015. Sponsored by Syncrude, the camps offer youth on-ice skill development, dry-land training, team building and more.

“We wanted to create a hockey program that would cater to kids living on reserves, who may sometimes be uncomfortable leaving their home,” says Brantt, a former NHL hockey player from Cold Lake, Alberta. “We pride ourselves in taking the workshop to another level by offering things like snapping each child’s picture for a lanyard at registration, and traditional talks led by Elders. It’s about more than just hockey.”

To learn about the Academy or register for future dates, visit [www.greaterstrides.ca](http://www.greaterstrides.ca) or follow them on Facebook.



The Greater Strides Hockey Academy aims to build confidence on and off the ice.





# Kickin' the cold

**The bitter cold of a northern winter can sometimes make us feel like staying in,** sitting in front of a television and not venturing outside unless we need to. So to get kids moving during the year's coldest season, the Fort McKay Youth Centre started to hold its activities outdoors.

"We were thinking of creative ways to get them outside and away from video games," says Kerry Trueman, youth coordinator with the Fort McKay First Nation. "Sometimes it's so cold here in the winter that we get into that rut of plunking down in front of the TV or computer."

Winter activities included skating, sledding and a ski club, which quickly became a favourite. Eighteen youth aged 12-18 were actively involved with the ski club and visited the Vista Ridge hill weekly as a group to spend the day together.

"It was the first winter we had so many new skiers, including some that had never been on skis before. It was so rewarding to see them conquer their fears," says Kerry. "For us with the Youth Centre, it was almost like

watching a baby bird leave the nest because we felt so much joy when they made it to the bottom of the bunny hill, beaming with pride. It gave them a boost of self-confidence and a new motivation to tackle other hills."

Funding from Syncrude helped with the activities, along with some other well-needed items during the season.

"Syncrude played a huge role in sponsorship with the ski club this year," explains Kerry. "They sponsored our season passes, transportation, meals and ensured we had extra mitts, snow pants and other warm clothing items some of our youth didn't have."

While the kids were moving outside in the day, they had evening activities too, including campfires to get the kids socializing together.

"It was nice to watch the youth interact with one another. They forgot about technology for the most part and enjoyed each other's company," says Kerry.

If you are a resident of Fort McKay and are interested in the Youth Centre's activities, call Kerry at 780-828-4462.

**"It was nice to watch the youth interact with one another. They forgot about technology for the most part and enjoyed each other's company."**



**With no time to waste,** Tyler Mitchell hasn't had more than two weeks off in three years.

"My dad always told me to work hard when I'm young," says Tyler, who recently spent four months in Syncrude's Aboriginal Summer Student program. "He's always been driven and a hard worker. I want to follow in his footsteps, especially when it comes to work ethic."

**"My dad always told me to work hard when I'm young... He's always been driven and a hard worker. I want to follow in his footsteps, especially when it comes to work ethic."**

and his sister has 13 years under her belt, so it seemed like a logical next step.

"The summer let me test the waters within this industry and experiment in a few areas of business administration I hadn't tried before," says the Cowessess First Nation member.

Tyler plans on majoring in First Nations Governance at the University of Lethbridge in 2015. After, he intends to head back home to work with industry.

"I want to obtain a career that will allow me to combine my education in Business Administration and First Nations Governance. I want to help build and maintain relationships between local Aboriginal communities and industry," says Tyler. "There are many opportunities in our region for the communities and industry to work together, and I think I can play a part in aligning them. Being born and raised here, I have a vested interest in the community, and I am very thankful that I will one day be able to come back and enjoy the opportunities that my home has to offer."

The Aboriginal Summer Student Program is a subset of Syncrude's General Summer Student and Co-op Programs, and made up 15 per cent of the students this year.

"We are very proud of these programs," says Donelda Patterson, Syncrude's manager of Human Resources Services. "We always try to fit students within their individual discipline when possible, but labourer positions are always a good first step too. We're always happy to see local Aboriginal and Métis students apply."

Tyler returned to school this fall with new learnings in his tool belt and a few steps closer to reaching his goals.



## ON PAR WITH THE PROS

Aboriginal youth had the opportunity to learn from some of the best in the sport at golf clinics held in conjunction with the Syncrude Boreal Open.

**"I never had this kind of opportunity growing up... It's great because it teaches kids a proper golf game."**

**On June 21<sup>st</sup>, 62 youth** polished their putting skills and golf swings at the RBC Aboriginal Youth Golf Clinic held in conjunction with the Syncrude Boreal Open.

Youth from Fort McKay, Fort McMurray, Janvier and Anzac were given the chance to clock in some one-on-one time with PGA Tour Canada players Jared Steger, Ben Fletcher and David Byrne. The hour-long clinic was just enough time for the professional golfers to hand off some of their best tips to the kids.

"I never had this kind of opportunity growing up," said Leonard Black, who brought his son James along to the clinic. "It's great because it teaches kids a proper golf game."

The age-old sport of golf continues to grow in popularity across the region. "Recently there has been a big push for golf," says Stefany Guillien, a recreational organizer for the Fort McKay community. "It turns out there is a lot of interest not only coming from the kids, but the parents too."

Organizers wrapped up the clinic on a high note by sending each participant home with a new set of golf clubs.

"Golf is really fun," said James. "I want to golf in tournaments one day."

+ e + v o l u t i o n + o f



Jasmine Dionne is a Métis student  
at the University of Calgary,  
majoring in Law and Society.

# excellence

## Jasmine Feather Dionne is the 2013 and 2014 recipient of the Syncrude Award

from the Belcourt Brosseau Métis Association. She is currently in second-year studies at the University of Calgary, majoring in Law and Society. We sat down with this high-achiever to gain insights on her experiences and aspirations.

**Q:** *Jasmine, what have you learned so far in your educational journey?*

**A:** Education powers the world. In fact it is the very thing that causes society to advance and develop to newer frontiers. We can certainly not advance forward socially, politically nor technically without well-educated people. Schooling is what I need to ultimately succeed at fulfilling my goals. And even after finishing only one year of university I can say that I am empowered to see the world in ways that I did not see before because it directed me to think critically and question everything, allowing me to see everything as a complex microcosm of this universe.

**Q:** *What role does your Métis heritage play in your life?*

**A:** All through my life I have always been proud to embrace my Métis background and to this day the pride grows even stronger. To me, being Métis is the most beautiful thing in the world. It is a culture deeply embedded in its long standing wisdom and is unique in its nature. Métis characteristics taught me to be humble in my actions and reactions, be appreciative and respectful of the knowledge of others and work hard in order to accomplish your goals.

**Q:** *How do you keep focused and motivated?*

**A:** All that I am composed of is fragments of my culture and knowledge. Education has strengthened me in these two aspects and continues to prove necessary throughout my life. Without education we place limits and barricades on our very human nature to

evolve into something far greater and more ambiguous than we can preconceive. I cannot ask for anything more valuable than for the opportunity to immerse myself into the vast depths of knowledge that continue to await me in university and for the rest of my life.

**Q:** *What has the Syncrude Award from the Belcourt Brosseau Métis Association meant to you and your education?*

**A:** This award has truly made me feel special by recognizing my strengths and my heritage. For that, I am most thankful. I also sincerely appreciate the great vision of the founders of the Belcourt Brosseau Métis Association, Georges, Herb and Orval, and for their strength to persevere, skilled wisdom and ultimately their push for higher education for the Métis.

**Q:** *Would you say this scholarship has opened up many doors for you?*

**A:** I feel as though this scholarship is an impetus to represent the entirety of Wood Buffalo where I was born and raised, the Métis as my principal underpinning, and ultimately the nations that make up our world because their fight fuels my aspiration in international law. I now have the ability to form commodious goals and be able to achieve them all because of the opportunities presented to me by the scholarship and Syncrude. Without their brace I would not be able to dream big in every sense of the term. In fact, I am proud to say that I am going to attend Harvard Summer School in June 2016 and plan to intern with Gap Journey in New York City after my undergraduate degree.

**Q:** *Any advice you would like to share with the younger generation?*

**A:** As an educated person you contribute great lengths to your community and society overall. No matter how unattainable your goals may seem, through education you can become anything.

**“All through my life I have always been proud to embrace my Métis background and to this day the pride grows even stronger.”**



# SERENITY BY THE LAKE

*Grand opening celebrations focused around the tipi and were attended by family, friends and industry representatives.*



**When walking through the eagle mosaic canopy** into the Fort Chipewyan Elder Care Centre, it's easy to see why this facility has received such positive feedback. Local workers, volunteers and the region's natural surroundings all helped to influence this much-needed addition to the community.

The entire facility was built with Elders—the region's most respected people—in mind. Indeed, up until this point, many seniors had to travel away from the community for extended medical attention.

"Some people have lived in Fort Chipewyan their entire lives and having to go south for medical care put stress on the patient and their families," says Beverley Robson, the Elder Care Centre's director. "Being in an unfamiliar place away from their home is not ideal, not to mention the financial burden."

It's been a labour of love from the beginning and the community played an important role in making the Centre feel like home. Feedback was ongoing from a small focus group which included Elders, community residents and service providers. They gave advice on everything from drapes and dishes, to building materials and paint colour. According to project leader Trish Merrithew-Mercredi, the need for a tipi was also an integral part of the building from early on.

"Many discussions took place in Cree and Dene over the importance of a tipi in the facility," says Trish, senior advisor

to Mikisew Cree First Nation Chief and Council. "We couldn't physically set up a tipi, but the circular room was built with it in mind. There is a wood-burning fire place at its centre with wood poles surrounding it, creating a central gathering space. We're also preparing a special canvas skin which can be used to enclose the tipi as needed."

Stone is present throughout the interior to mimic the natural materials found in the area, and artwork can be found in every room and around the facility. Each photograph displays images from nature, landscapes or pieces of history in the region.

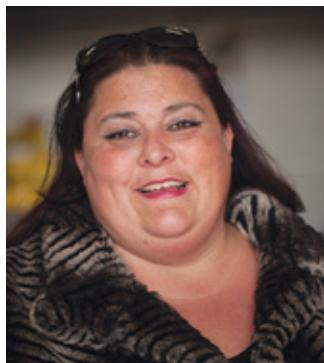
"We hope some of the photographs will spark memories of 'remember when' for the patients," says Beverley.

More than just feeling at home, many of the patients will physically be at home. A memory box is located outside each room to hold items such as photos or special belongings, and a regular stove and oven was installed for residents who wish to cook or bake. A health room is also fitted with an adjustable sink, which mimics the relaxing feeling of a beauty salon.

"Every room has a sleep chair so family members can stay overnight comfortably. Every room also has a window that can be opened," says Trish. "People are used to being out on the land. They want the fresh air and light shining through their window. Most of all they want to be able to see the lake."

*The Elder Care Centre reflects the input and values of the local community.*





**Arianna Johnson**

*Executive Director of the  
Wood Buffalo Food Bank*

*Syncrude is proud to support the Wood Buffalo Food Bank and is the lead sponsor of the annual food drive held each December.*

*Contact the Food Bank at 780-743-1125 for more information on how to volunteer or donate.*

### **From flooding to a 43 per cent increase in clients, the Wood Buffalo Food Bank faced many challenges in 2013.**

But perseverance and community support conquered all and the not-for-profit continued to keep the doors open and the food delivered.

Thanks to generous individual and corporate donations, the organization was also able to expand services to rural communities in the region, and offered the first Mobile Pantry Program in Fort McKay.

"Three years ago, when I first started with the Food Bank, a series of roundtables were held with stakeholders, clients and different community groups to really identify what were some of our barriers,"

says Arianna Johnson, executive director of the Wood Buffalo Food Bank. "The thing we heard repeatedly from our rural communities was that transportation was a barrier."

After researching mobile programs across North America, a program specific to the region was developed. "We started to have communication with rural communities. The Fort McKay First Nation came forward and, through their annual Rod Hyde Hockey Tournament, raised \$10,000 for the mobile pantry," explains Arianna.

**"The thing we heard repeatedly from our rural communities was that transportation was a barrier."**

The mobile program, which started up in February 2013, operates in a similar way to the in-town pantry program and provides accessibility to those that require services in Fort McKay. Clients reserve an appointment time at the Fort McKay Health Care Centre. The health centre then contacts the Food Bank which brings the hampers out for pickup or distribution. A trailer that was partly

donated by NAPA Auto Parts transports the hampers and perishable food items, such as meat and fresh produce. The Food Bank also offers other items, such as diapers, pet food, coffee, tea and toiletry items.

"The only difference in the hampers going to Fort McKay is that we

guarantee every hamper lard and flour for bannock," says Arianna. "When the nutritionist in Fort McKay looked at the hamper list, she didn't feel like there was anything we should take off, but suggested we include the supplies for bannock."

Now, after the first successful year of running the mobile pantry, the Food Bank is looking to expand the program to other rural communities and bridge their services across the region.



# SAFETY



# FIRST

## **Whether it's daybreak on a cold, clear January day**

or a warm, misty June morning, Maxine Leclercq rises early to feed her dogs, cats and bird before getting ready for her next shift at Christina River Enterprises.

She has done it thousands of times—literally.

As the company's longest-serving employee, Maxine has seen the company evolve from a novice start-up into an influential and innovative enterprise.

"I have seen a lot of changes since I have been here, because when I started, we probably had about 30 employees and we only had two contracts, and now we have more than 200 employees and many different contracts," says Maxine, who began her career with the 100 per cent Aboriginal-owned company 20 years ago as a custodian and is now a safety administrator.

Operated by the Fort McMurray #468 First Nation, Christina River Enterprises was launched in 1987 as a small business focusing on building pallets and procuring custodial contracts. Today, it has expanded to include construction and site support, expediting and other services through more than 20 different companies, either as wholly-owned subsidiaries or partners. Syncrude is one of its longest-standing clients.

"Maxine has certainly grown with the company, and she is a hard worker and is very personable. Her advancement with the company is a testament to that," says Christina River Enterprises CEO, Steve Jani. "She is just good at what she does and adds value to our organization."

Maxine grew up in Edmonton and moved to Fort McMurray as a teenager. She began her career with the company in 1994

and eventually decided to further her education by taking some safety-related courses.

Her many pets keep her well occupied when she isn't working, as does her hobby crafting beaded jewelry.



She and her husband of 17 years plan to buy an acreage in the area after they retire.

"I don't like a whole lot of change, and I really do enjoy my job, so it made sense for me to stay with Christina River and build my career here," says Maxine.

Her responsibilities include tracking and filing safety documents and organizing and overseeing orientations and safety courses for the company.

"I really like the people here and I'm proud to be the longest serving employee," says Maxine. "I've been able to build a lot of good relationships with people and I look forward to coming to work and seeing my co-workers every day. I'm happy to come to work every morning."



**"Maxine has certainly grown with the company, and she is a hard worker and is very personable. Her advancement with the company is a testament to that."**  
Steve Jani

Christina River Enterprises CEO

# CEREMONY & CELEBRATION

Each summer, local First Nations and Métis Locals host community events to celebrate culture and traditions. These events have grown in both popularity and prominence, attracting people from throughout the region and far beyond.



Beadwork and traditional crafts are popular items for sale at Treaty Days.

## FORT MCKAY TREATY DAYS

Treaty Days dates back to 1899 when the Fort McKay First Nation became a signatory to Treaty 8. It has since become a weekend-long celebration that brings to life both traditional and contemporary Cree and Dene games, entertainment and cuisine. This year, over 3,000 people joined in on an array of festivities that included jigging, hand games, traditional feasts and live entertainment. Performances by artists Dwight Yoakam and Don Amero were held in the community's new amphitheatre.



Pop singer Inez Jasper (above) was a featured performer at the Métis Festival.

## MÉTIS FESTIVAL

The Métis Festival is a once-a-year celebration of the Métis heritage in Fort McMurray. On May 23<sup>rd</sup>, a public invitation drew in a crowd of over 1,500 people from across the region to experience first-hand the traditions of Métis people. Throughout the day, the crowd was treated to traditional Métis cuisine and activities that included jigging, fiddling, games and performances by award-winning Métis artists. This year, the festival also welcomed new activities, such as a storytelling tipi, jigging patio and an artisan market.





# Greatness in Giving

## **"Learn as if you were to live forever."**

These words from Mahatma Gandhi continue to inspire decades later and are reflected in the important endeavours of many people throughout Wood Buffalo.

One of those in particular is Gail Gallupe, newly appointed president of the Métis Local 1935. Being an educational assistant herself, Gail is excited about her new role and the opportunity to promote the organization's scholarships.

***"I've always been a volunteer throughout my life and I'm looking forward to giving back in this position."***

"Our Métis Bursary Program allows eligible post-secondary students to apply for \$3,000 each semester. The age doesn't matter, whether they're new high school graduates or mature students going back," says Gail, who began her four-year presidency term in June. "This is thanks to funding from industry, and fundraisers like our golf tournament and volunteer casinos."

In 2013, more than \$100,000 was awarded to eligible students of Métis descent. So far this year, close to \$150,000 has been distributed.

"As part of the program, bursary recipients volunteer their time at one of our events, such as Métis Days or our golf tournament," Gail adds.

Gail is no stranger to volunteering herself. In fact, she has served on the Métis Local's board of directors for the past four years. Former president Dicky Dragon encouraged her to run for the top position and, to her surprise, she won.

"I've always been a volunteer throughout my life and I'm looking forward to giving back in this position," says Gail. "For my term, I hope to encourage our members to be proud of their heritage. It's important for us to have a voice and continue to be involved with government and industry decision making processes, especially when it comes to the environment."

Recently, Métis Local 1935 renewed a memorandum of understanding with Syncrude that outlines an ongoing partnership to continue to work together.

"We have many common goals and the memorandum outlines that we'll continue to keep communication channels open and listen to each other's needs," she adds. "We want to keep the grassroots people involved."

***"It's important for us to have a voice and continue to be involved with government and industry decision making processes, especially when it comes to the environment."***

*For more information about Métis Local 1935 or bursary opportunities, please visit [www.fortmcmurraymetis.org](http://www.fortmcmurraymetis.org)*



## QUEEN of the COURT

**Graduating from Father Mercredi High School** was a balancing act for self-described student athlete Brooke Metchewais. Between school and sports, she walked a tight rope, but she managed to never lose sight of what was important.

"There's a reason why student comes first in student-athlete," says Brooke, a member of the Cold Lake First Nation. "At the end of the day, knowledge is what takes you far."

**"There's a reason why student comes first in student-athlete. At the end of the day, knowledge is what takes you far."**

be yourself and don't let anyone sway you, you'll be on the right path."

Born and raised in Fort McMurray, Brooke's career in sports began at just four-years-old. Over the years, her portfolio grew to include badminton, rugby, volleyball, hockey and soccer. It wasn't until her first year of high school that Brooke discovered her love for basketball.

She took home numerous awards in high school, including Most Valuable Player, Player of the Year and All Around Best Player, to name a few. Father Mercredi basketball coach Cat Altares saw Brooke's dedication first-hand.

"Brooke ensured she committed to her role as a student first in order to participate on the Senior Basketball Team. She understood the importance of academics playing a key role. She led the team as one of the captains and is a natural born leader."

As a part of graduation, Brooke participated in the Traditional Celebration of Achievement, supported in part by Syncrude. This celebration serves to recognize and honour First Nations, Métis and Inuit graduates in the Wood Buffalo region.

"It was a really good experience for me," says Brooke. "It opened my eyes to see what I celebrate and how beautiful the culture is."

Juggling school and sports was not easy but her family kept her on point. Her sister Carlee was a role model for Brooke, providing her with the guidance and support when she needed it most. Parents Carolyn Walsh and Burt Metchewais, both Syncrude employees, are proud to have raised their daughter in Fort McMurray. "It gave Brooke the opportunity to be involved in many different activities," says Burt. "She was naturally talented in any sport she tried."

Brooke began a new chapter this fall to pursue a Sports Management Degree at Camosun College in Victoria, British Columbia.

"I think it will give me a chance to grow and experience new things," says Brooke. "I'm a bit nervous, but really excited."



## FROM COMICS TO COMMUNICATIONS

**For as long as Jessie Woodward** can remember, her summers were spent running barefoot in the grass and on the beach at her late grandparents' home on the Fort McMurray #468 First Nation. Now grown up, Jessie entered her first year towards a Bachelor of Communications and was named Syncrude's 2014 Rod Hyde Award recipient.

During the summers spent on the reserve, Jessie spent much of her time reading and writing. These skills would play a big role in her post-secondary path at MacEwan University in Edmonton.

"I've always been a bit of a nerd and reading was always a big part of my life. Growing up I would read Archie comics all the time, and I was so proud of my collection," laughs Jessie. "Communications will open doors for me to be creative in whatever career path I choose, whether it's public affairs, magazine writing or owning my own business."

Originally from Saskatchewan, Jessie moved to the Fort McMurray #468 First Nation in 2013 to live with her father. She also changed her First Nation affiliation to reflect where she was living, and the connection she felt to the region.

"I would come up and spend every summer on the reserve and I felt it was time to fully immerse myself," says Jessie. "I am proud of the First Nation and all the progress and activities I see happening. I wanted to make sure I was part of that."

The annual summer visit was one Jessie and her sister looked forward to each year. Her mushum and kokum, Bill and Nancy Woodward, were long-time residents of the region and Jessie valued their traditional teachings.

"My sister and I were taught everything from how to fish, to make dry fish or meat, to building a tipi and beading. Even though I may not use these skills every day, I'm so glad I had the chance to learn," says Jessie. "My grandparents also had large gardens, chickens, rabbits and goats—it was like a little farm. It was a magical place. All of these memories shape who I am today, and I'll always be grateful."

*Syncrude's Rod Hyde Aboriginal Education Award provides one \$2,000 award annually to an Aboriginal student from the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo pursuing post-secondary education. For more information or to apply for the award, please visit [www.syncrude.ca](http://www.syncrude.ca) or phone 780-790-6356.*

# ABORIGINAL RELATIONS

# 40

# YEARS

*(and counting!).*

# CREATING OPPORTUNITY

Since formalizing our Aboriginal Relations program in 1974, Syncrude has remained committed to working alongside the region's First Nations and Métis Locals.





**A**s residents would gather from the local community to feast and celebrate, the crowded room would echo with easy laughter and spirited conversation.

A hush, however, would fall as each speaker would make his or her way up to the front to accept the award presented by their employer.

Each individual would often tell his or her story, offer thanks or share personal hopes for the future.

"In the early years of our Aboriginal recruitment efforts, I remember those gatherings well," says retired Syncrude mining general manager Dennis Love, who was integral in the success of Aboriginal recruitment initiatives launched at Syncrude about 40 years ago. "They were really what made me believe our program was a success."

"We'd go all-out and take our senior leadership to the event, going into our Aboriginal workers' communities to present people with awards for safety or attendance. Even workers who tended to be very quiet and reserved on the job site would just open up in the presence of their community members. We learned a lot about each other at those gatherings."

Since formalizing its Aboriginal Relations program in 1974, Syncrude has remained committed to working alongside the region's five First Nations and six Métis Locals.

Today, Syncrude is one of the largest private-sector employers of Aboriginal people in Canada, with Aboriginal people representing about nine per cent of its total employee population. In addition, Syncrude has conducted over \$2 billion in business with Aboriginal companies, including \$186 million in 2013 alone.

"While we may have been a pioneer in Aboriginal relations, we can't rest on our laurels," says Syncrude's newly appointed chief executive officer Mark Ward. "Every day we must re-commit ourselves to effective and authentic engagement, and ensure we take a principled and sincere approach that enables our Aboriginal neighbours to share in the opportunities generated by our operations."

The representation of Aboriginal people in the regional population is about 11 per cent and Syncrude endeavours to see that mirrored in its workforce. In its early years, such a target seemed lofty indeed, but Dennis became one of several employees who made it a priority to help his employer meet that goal.

"In 1977, I was in a meeting where the president was giving us all an update," says Dennis. "He made it very clear no other company was employing Aboriginal people, and we needed to take a leadership role. I took that very seriously."

Recruitment became proactive and personal, and Dennis hired an Aboriginal recruiter to visit people's homes,

encourage open and frank communication, and mediate concerns. At the same time, many of the people who built Syncrude's Aboriginal Relations program either lived in or worked in Aboriginal communities themselves.

Jim Carbery lived and worked in Fort Chipewyan as a teacher, vice principal, community development officer and educational councillor for seven years before he joined Syncrude in 1982 to help manage and develop Aboriginal programs for the company.

"I was responsible for recruitment and business development, and while management was always very supportive of the Aboriginal relations program, we knew we would have to invest in Aboriginal communities and education if our recruitment program was really going to thrive," says Jim, who in 1987 was made an honourary Chief of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation and the Mikisew Cree First Nation with the name Dene Kawechehat—He Who Helps. After retiring from Syncrude in 1995, Jim went on to become the chief executive officer of the Fort McKay Group of Companies.

Over the years, Syncrude has donated millions of dollars towards education, health and cultural initiatives. One example is the \$2 million invested in 2008 for the creation of the Syncrude Aboriginal Trades Preparation Program at Keyano College, which enabled students to prepare for trades apprenticeship training. By the time the program wrapped up in 2012, a total of 68 students had successfully completed the program.

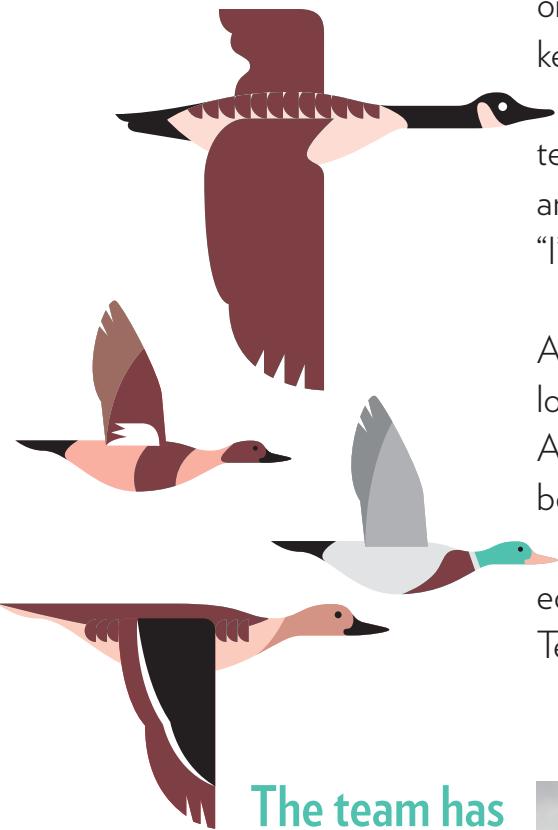
Retired Syncrude president and chief operating officer Jim Carter recalls how the company also introduced a fly-in rotational program to respect the needs of Aboriginal employees who lived in Fort Chipewyan. "The program allows residents of the remote community to work at the company while maintaining ties to their family, friends and traditions," he says. "It has successfully operated for more than 30 years and is the only program of its kind in the industry."

Jim Carbery believes Syncrude's Aboriginal relations program isn't solely about what the company has done for Aboriginal people—it is about what Aboriginal community members have done for themselves. "We have just endeavoured to support them in those efforts," he says. "Their success is our success."



*Retired mining general manager Dennis Love was an early champion of Syncrude's Aboriginal Relations program.*

# A CARING TEAM HOLDS SAFETY SKY HIGH



The team has recently met a major safety milestone—reaching five years incident-free.

*Suncrude's Bird Environment Team oversees the operation's waterfowl monitoring and protection program.*

**Safe in the sky and safe on the ground**—that's what the Bird Environment Team (BET) strives for each day on the job.

Their main priority is Syncrude's waterfowl monitoring program, which aims to protect birds and migrating waterfowl from site. The team has recently met a major safety milestone—reaching five years incident-free.

The nature of the job can be demanding at times—hiking over uneven terrain, operating off-road equipment, maintenance on pond boats and fixing monitor gear. It's taken a team effort to keep safety a priority.

"People in the field are our first line of defense, and the team takes it seriously. There's a lot of geography to cover and their risk exposure is high," says John Fresz, BET lead. "I'm proud of the work they do and the way they do it."

With close to 40 people on six different shifts at the Aurora and Mildred Lake sites, the team is always on the lookout for ways to keep themselves and waterfowl safe. According to BET member Terry Gillingham, there's nothing better than a job well-done.

"At the end of the day it's rewarding to see the deterrent equipment working, and watching the birds fly away," says Terry. "That's what it's all about."



# AN IMPRESSIVE DISPLAY



**Top**

Joane Cardinal-Schubert  
*Buffalo Herd (untitled)*, n.d.

Oil on BFK paper

Estate of Joane Cardinal-Schubert

**Right**

Kimowan Metchewais  
*Sunrise Ceremony*, 1992

Silkscreen on paper

Collection of Tanya Harnett

**Far Right**

Kimowan Metchewais  
*Family*, n.d.

Photographic collage

Collection of Leona Metchewais

Images courtesy of the Art Gallery of Alberta





**Lisa Gingras** is an educator with a passion for art. So when the Art Gallery of Alberta contacted her about the possibility of bringing an exhibit to her school, she jumped at the opportunity.

"I've always had a passion for art and for incorporating it into everyday school work," says Lisa, who has been a teacher at Cold Lake Elementary School for the past 10 years.

**"The students asked many questions, created their own work and then took it home to share with family and friends. The response was outstanding."**

The Path Makers Exhibit, curated by Tanya Harnett, was initiated by the Art Gallery as a tribute to the extraordinary work created by Aboriginal artists Dale Auger, Joanne Cardinal-Schubert and Kimowan (Kim McLain) Metchewais. "We were very happy when we received word the exhibit would be coming to our community," adds Lisa. "Kim was a member of the Cold Lake First Nation."

The crates of artwork arrived at the school during the first week of May and the students got their first hands-on experience when it comes to showcasing important artwork.

"The students were very involved in the project," assures Gingras. "They helped in various ways to set up the display, but the knowledge they gained and the insight they offered through their own creations was even more meaningful. We discussed the art, the colours, the messages that the artists were sharing and more. The students asked many questions, created their own work and then took it home to share with family and friends. The response was outstanding."

*The Path Makers Exhibit was part of The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition (TREX) Program, presented by the Art Gallery of Alberta. Syncrude is a proud sponsor of this program, which features the works of Aboriginal artists and travels to schools and communities in the province.*



# A PATH → OF ← HER OWN

*A resident of Fort Chipewyan, Mabel Laviolette has valued her participation in Syncrude's rotational program and been an employee since 1981.*

**Mabel Laviolette is proud of her hands,** and all they've helped her achieve.

"My hands are strong and coarse," laughs 64-year-old Mabel. "There's nothing dainty about them. I've worked them hard over the years."

She came from a humble and challenging upbringing in Fort Chipewyan that helped shape her into the proud, strong woman she is today. Where some instability existed, Mabel's grandfather stepped up to play an important part of her childhood and was a constant figure.

**"I was a dragline and bucketwheel labourer and I can remember being so curious about how the equipment worked. I wanted to know everything."**

With resources from his trap line and the land, her grandfather helped the family survive harsh winters with food in their bellies and warmth in their home. Mabel and her siblings spoke English, and her grandfather only spoke Cree. The words weren't as important as the love, which was always understood.

Despite the challenges her family faced, Mabel's mother was another constant figure in her life and a strong guiding influence.

"We grew up poor and my mother wanted us to become something. That's when I decided to leave my home and give it a try. I've never regretted it," says Mabel.

In 1977, she came to Fort McMurray and enrolled in a five week labourer program at Keyano College. After a few different jobs with the labour union, she started at Syncrude's Bird Environment Team (BET) in 1981.

"I feel like I've been here since day one. I saw the plant grow from the bottom up," she says. "I tried to leave many times to try other work, but there was always something pulling me back. It's always been so fascinating to me; this is the place where I'm meant to be."

Mabel was part of the original team of three who helped monitor and deter waterfowl at Syncrude in the 1980s.

"It was a Native program from the start. We had a system and kept it going," says Mabel, who worked with Gordon Grandjambe and Lawrence Powder, both from Fort McKay. "Then it became the Natives and Newfoundlanders, and the Syncrude family grew from there."

From the start, Mabel took advantage of Syncrude's rotational program, so she could help look after her mother and raise a family. The program started in 1980 for residents of Fort Chipewyan, allowing them to live at camp while working at Syncrude, and then fly home on days off. For Mabel, the program allowed flexibility to be close to her roots, while contributing to the company's progress and gaining her own independence.

During the team's slow winter months, Mabel had the opportunity to work in different areas as the plant continued to change and grow. "I was a dragline and bucketwheel labourer and I can remember being so curious about how the equipment worked. I wanted to know everything," Mabel says with a smile. "I would listen to other people as they fixed things to try and learn as much as I could. It's always been important to me to work hard and do a good job."

Mabel and her common-law partner, Roland MacKay, both continued to work and raise their four

children in Fort McMurray and Fort Chipewyan, and are now the proud grandparents to seven grandkids. Mabel has never forgotten the advice of her late mother, who pushed her to be proud of herself.

"Growing up I was never hugged or told 'I love you,' but things were different back then," she says. "Whenever my mother said 'my children' in Chipewyan, I could feel the love she had for me and my siblings. She always wanted us to become something."

In 2015, Mabel plans to retire after more than 30 years at Syncrude. She is proud of how far BET has come, the advancements in keeping wildlife safe, and the hard work she's accomplished with her own two hands.

"I am grateful for the chance I was given at Syncrude. I am part of this place. I've always felt like I belonged here and I became a different person because of that," Mabel adds. "I'm proud to be a Native woman of my age, and still working in a field that I love. I'm proud to be here."



**"Whenever my mother said 'my children' in Chipewyan, I could feel the love she had for me and my siblings. She always wanted us to become something."**

# ENVIRO UPDATE

## Sandhill Fen continues to impress



*The Sandhill Fen area, summer 2014.*

The Sandhill Fen Watershed research project is surpassing expectations. Early results are extremely encouraging and the information being gathered is invaluable towards improving wetland reclamation best practices.

A number of wetland plants were assessed in 2013 and their performance is already comparable to the same plants on a natural site. In addition, over 80 species of indigenous plants have successfully established in the watershed and are growing voluntarily without even having been planted. These include Rat root, raspberry, strawberry, pin cherry and Saskatoon berry.

The 57-hectare area was built on a base of soft tailings capped with sand and is the first of its kind in the world. Eight multi-year research programs, involving a number of universities, are now collecting data on hydrology, wetland and terrestrial plant response, carbon dynamics and climate conditions.

"It has truly been both astonishing and personally rewarding to see a former 40-metre deep open pit converted into a fen-like wetland supporting the early stages of a fully functioning biological community," says project collaborator and University of Alberta professor, Dr. Jan Ciborowski. "This is a landmark accomplishment that demonstrates the company's capacity to recreate an essential component of the ecosystem that will be an important element of the post-mining landscape."

The fen project also garnered praise by the multi-stakeholder independent panel who judged the Mining Association of Canada's inaugural Towards Sustainable Mining (TSM) Awards earlier this year. The project was recognized with the Award for Environmental Excellence.



UP, UP  
AND  
AWAY

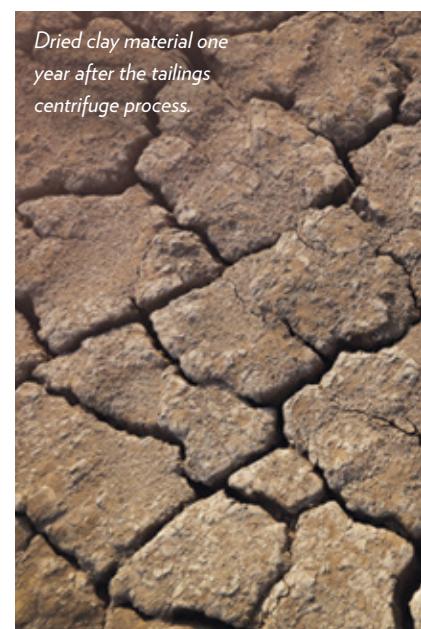


Reclamation reached new heights in June 2013. Numerous boxes containing 64,000 seedlings took flight via helicopter to reach planting areas too wet to be safely accessed on the ground due to heavy rains. Four species of trees and eight species of shrubs arrived in giant nets where they were greeted on the ground by eager planters.

*Dried clay material one year after the tailings centrifuge process.*

### Air emissions reduced with new project

Emissions of sulphur dioxide ( $\text{SO}_2$ ) continue to decrease and in 2013 were at the second-lowest level in Syncrude's operating history. This is attributed to the commissioning of our new \$1.6 billion emissions reduction project. When combined with previously deployed emissions management technology, this project will reduce our  $\text{SO}_2$  emissions by 60 per cent from 2005 levels. Particulate emissions will also decline by around 50 per cent. Our focus for 2014 has been to ensure the reliable operation of this project and its related units.





## Science beneath the surface

*Shoreline of the water-capped lake.*

Research and monitoring continues on the industry's first commercial-scale demonstration of water-capped tailings. Scientists are observing the performance of the lake, located in our former Base mine, as it evolves into an aquatic ecosystem. They are focusing on water quality, impacts of the underlying fluid fine tails layer, performance of the littoral (shallow shoreline) zone, interaction of biological communities, consolidation of the tailings, development of the shoreline, and the establishment of plants and insects.

Water capping involves the placement of a layer of water over a deposit of fluid fine tails to form a lake. Syncrude began researching this technology in the 1980s and has demonstrated its viability through extensive testing. Results show these lakes will develop into natural ecosystems and, over time, support healthy communities of aquatic plants, animals and fish.

## Celebrating new beginnings

As part of Syncrude's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, a special ceremony was held with members of local Aboriginal communities to name one of our newer reclamation areas on September 17<sup>th</sup>.

The area, named *New Beginnings, Oski Sechi Kewina* in Cree and *NeDegóth Honithéi* in Dene, has had 730 of its 1,245 hectares already reclaimed since 2005.

Bio-engineering has helped control erosion and introduced new plant growth through the direct placement of coarse woody debris and "stick bundles" of willow and poplar. Forest floor material, such as fiber and leaf litter, was also placed to help indigenous plants such as Labrador Tea, strawberries and Wild Rose return.



(From left to right) Alec Courtoile, Celina Harpe, Gail Gallupe, Jean L'Homme court, Mary Marcel, Syncrude CEO Mark Ward, Wesley Cardinal, David Janvier, Ross Campbell, William Cockerill.



## Wildlife returning to reclaimed land

There's a lot more in Syncrude's reclaimed and nearby natural areas than you'll see at first glance. In fact, during our 2013 monitoring program, over 2,100 birds of 59 species were assessed at eight stations in and around our operation.

Monitoring is done through visual observations, acoustic recordings, motion-activated cameras and track plates to detect the range of birds and mammals. Two stations captured the most species—one located in a natural area and the other in a reclaimed area. Since the program began in 2011, 111 species have been banded or observed.

Automated audio recordings have also detected the presence of Boreal Chorus frogs and wood frogs, as well as Silver-haired, Hoary, northern Long-eared and Little Brown bats. Stations equipped with motion-detection cameras captured an abundance of wildlife including coyote, black bear, grey wolf, lynx, moose, fisher, white-tailed deer, red fox, snowshoe hare, beaver and red squirrel. Monitoring continued in 2014.

## Putting a new spin on tailings

Following successful field pilots and an ongoing commercial demonstration project, a full-scale tailings centrifuge plant is under construction for a 2015 in-service date.

The \$1.9 billion plant will accelerate the reclamation process by converting fluid fine tailings into a clay soil material that can be used in post-mining landform construction. The technology involves putting tailings through equipment where a spinning action, or centrifuging, separates out the water. Released water will be recycled back into plant operations.

The resulting clay material will initially be used to reclaim portions of our North mine, where it will be capped with soil and re-vegetated.





# ABORIGINAL RELATIONS SCORECARD

## Syncrude Direct Workforce

Total Aboriginal Employees (#)

2013

**452**

2009	2010	2011	2012
479	484	492	474

## Representation in:

Permanent Syncrude Workforce (%)

2013

**8.7**

2009	2010	2011	2012
8.4	8.4	8.6	9.1

Administration, Professional and Technical (%)

2013

**6.0**

2009	2010	2011	2012
5.9	5.4	5.5	5.9

Trades and Operators (%)

2013

**10.6**

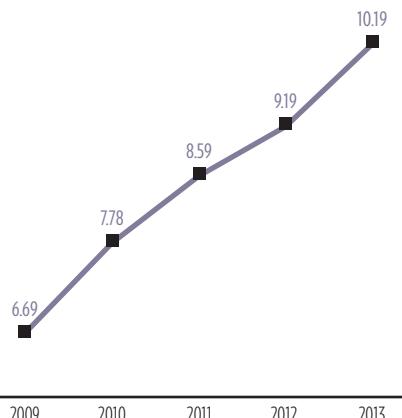
2009	2010	2011	2012
11.3	10.5	11.2	11.7

Syncrude hired 32 Aboriginal people in 2013. This represents over six per cent of our overall hiring.

## Community Investment

Investing in Aboriginal Communities

(\\$ millions, cumulative since 2001)



Syncrude invested approximately \$1 million in Aboriginal initiatives and projects during 2013.

## Environment

Permanent Land Reclaimed

- hectares cumulative
- hectares per year



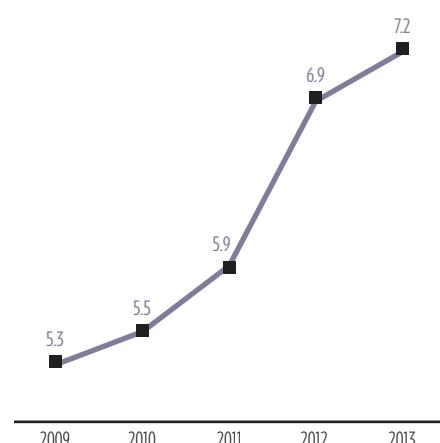
Syncrude has permanently reclaimed over 3,400 hectares to date. Another 1,000 hectares are ready for revegetation.

Note: Permanent land reclamation numbers decreased in 2011 due to changes in the Government of Alberta's definition of permanent reclamation. This reporting change has reclassified some land to either temporary reclamation, such as the bison pasture, or land with soils placed and available for revegetation (but on which no planting has yet occurred).

## Environment

Tree and Shrub Seedlings Planted

(millions, cumulative)



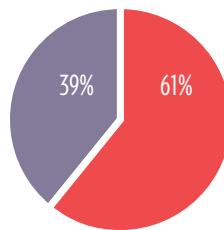
In 2013, over 305,000 tree and shrubs seedlings were planted. Over 2,000 Western Wood Lily plants and bulbs were also planted to assess their growth habits and adaptability to reclaimed land.



### Oil Sands Reclamation

(permanent and certified)

- Syncrude
- All Other Oil Sands Mining

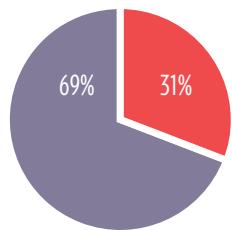


Data Source: Government of Alberta Regional Reclamation and Disturbance Tracking by Company, to December 31, 2013

### Oil Sands Mining Active Footprint

(hectares)

- Syncrude
- All Other Oil Sands Mining



Data Source: Government of Alberta Regional Reclamation and Disturbance Tracking by Company, to December 31, 2013

### Recruitment and Retention

#### Leaders and Management (%)

2013

# 6.2

2009	2010	2011	2012
5.9	5.8	5.5	6.0

#### Aboriginal New Hires (% of all hires)

2013

# 6.3

2009	2010	2011	2012
10.8	10.4	15.4	9.8

#### Aboriginal Attrition Rate (%)

2013

# 8.2

2009	2010	2011	2012
9.8	10.2	5.6	10.4

#### Aboriginal Employee Service (# of years)

2013

# 10.8

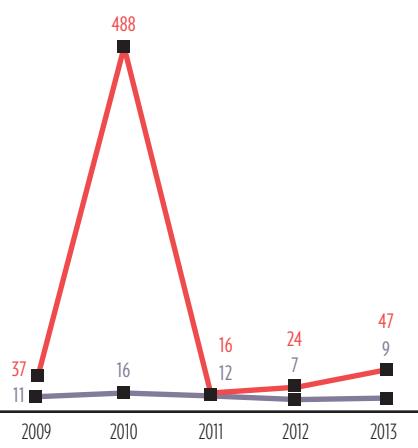
2009	2010	2011	2012
9.7	9.6	10.2	10.2

Of our total workforce, about nine per cent are of self-declared First Nations, Métis or Inuit descent.

### Wildlife Incident Tracking

(# of incidents)

- Avian<sup>1</sup>
- Other Animal<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Avian numbers include all bird and waterfowl mortalities related to oiling. Incidents are reported to the Alberta Government Environment and Sustainable Resource Development department. In 2013, an additional 16 mortalities were reported related to vehicle collision or natural or unknown causes.

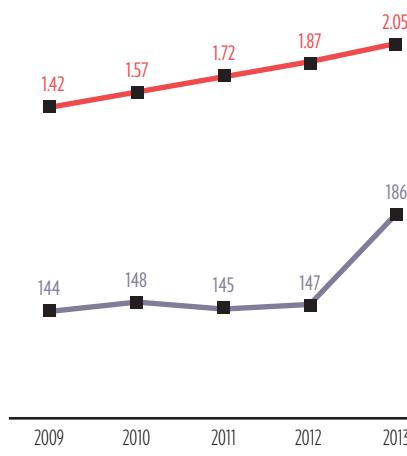
<sup>2</sup> Includes all animal mortalities, regardless of cause, including those in which the cause was natural, due to predation or unknown.

### Business

#### Contracts with Aboriginal Companies

■ \$ billions, cumulative

■ \$ millions, annually



Total Aboriginal business spending for 2013 was a record \$186 million—an increase of 27 per cent from 2012. The cumulative total for Syncrude business with First Nations- and Métis-owned companies is over \$2 billion.

### Education

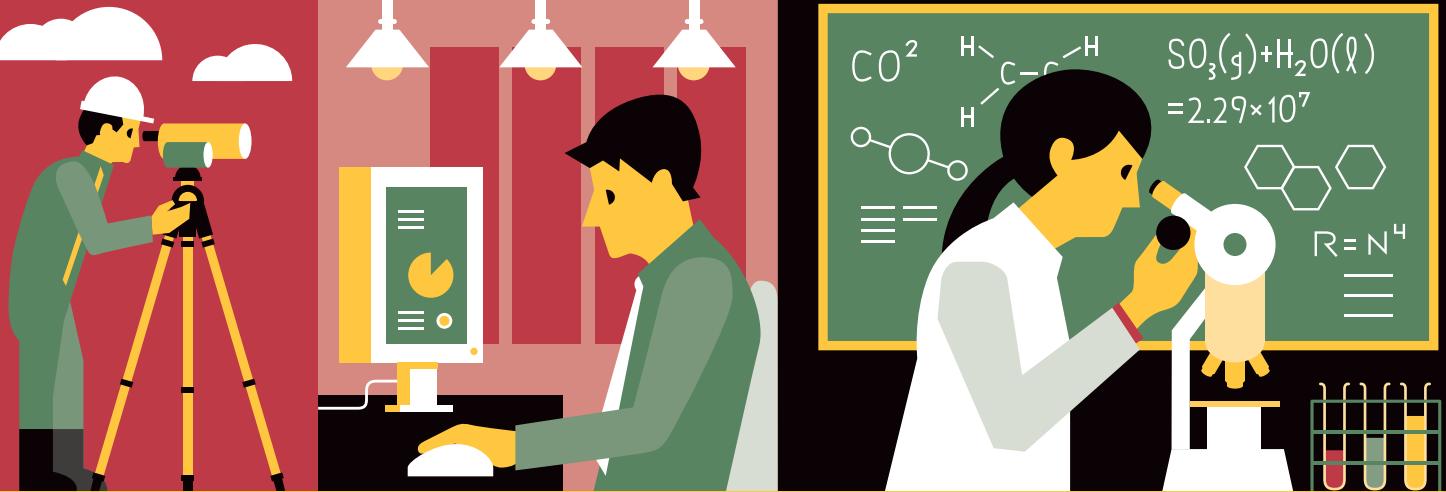
#### Interested in a Syncrude scholarship?

Since starting operations in 1978, Syncrude has provided ongoing financial support towards 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 focused on a variety of fields, including engineering, nursing, education and environmental sciences. For a complete list of available scholarships, please visit [www.syncrude.ca](http://www.syncrude.ca) and click on Community-Syncrude Award and Scholarships. Many of the awards available are prioritized for Aboriginal and northern Alberta recipients.

### Our Aboriginal Business Commitment

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



# CELEBRATING OUR PEOPLE

## Syncrude's greatest resource is our people.

Today, around nine per cent of our workforce is of First Nations, Métis or Inuit descent. Here, we celebrate those Aboriginal employees who reached service milestones between October 2013 and October 2014.

Congratulations and thank you for making a career with Syncrude!

### 5 Years of Service

Wendy Adonyi  
Herman Alook  
Drew A. Anderson  
Shawn Bain  
Mark A. Benoit  
George R. Brown  
Christine Cardinal  
Brad Chalifoux  
Tristan J. Cook  
Gregory Curl  
Shayne Davis  
Margaret DeCorby  
Patrice Ethier  
Peter R. Fleming  
Lester T. Flett  
Jeremiah R. Fryer  
Connie Gladue  
Robert L. Grandjambe

Larry Grills  
Christopher Hamacher  
Mark H. Harding  
April Hinks  
Matthew S Hobbs  
Cory Jahelka  
Willis G. Janvier  
Phillip B. Jean  
Robert King  
Joshua Lands  
Norman Lands  
Amy MacKenzie  
Gregory C. Mahoney  
Matthew D. Martinook  
Rhonda L. McKay  
Cassandra Mclean  
Robert W. Metacat-Yah  
Jerry B. Molnar

Curtis Morfitt  
Shawn G. Netmaker  
Patrick Organ  
Jody D. Pierce  
Jamie L. Plamondon  
Derrick J. Quilty  
Wilbert Quintal  
Melanie Serroul-Jacobs  
Katherine S. Sharpe  
David R. Sinclair  
Sylvia Skinner  
Matthew D. Steinhauer  
Jamie Sullivan  
Cody T. Tremblay  
Joyce Tuccaro  
Alan VanWalleghem  
Terri Lynn Villebrun  
Jeff S. Voyageur

### 10 Years of Service

Fred Balmer  
Perry Best  
Chad Collier  
Keanyn Coutu  
Blair B. Drew  
James Helmer  
Kristin Higney  
Benny Larocque  
Mooney Peggy  
Joanne Nickel  
Scott Pruden

### 15 Years of Service

Anthony Ladouceur

### 20 Years of Service

Barry Boucher  
Clifford Cardinal  
Brenda L. Ganter  
Mathew Grant  
Ken D. Leece  
Clinton L'Heureux  
Anthony Punko

### 25 Years of Service

Steve Benoit  
Mike Cardinal  
Rita Cyprien  
Jeanette Flynn  
Donald J. Foy  
Burton C. Metchewais

### 35 Years of Service

Leo Keith

### Retirements/ Congratulations

Daniel Bowen  
Lester C. Forbister  
Robert Mathews



# Our Aboriginal Relations Program

Syncrude's Aboriginal Relations Program is focused on six key commitment areas:



## 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 towards 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 executives, senior managers and advisors from throughout Syncrude who meet monthly to guide and champion strategies to ensure positive outcomes for Aboriginal stakeholders. An Aboriginal Relations team supports the Committee; they manage the day-to-day interactions and relationships with local stakeholders.



## The Aboriginal Relations Steering Committee

### Back Row

<b>Robert Hargreaves</b> Manager, Facilities	<b>Fred Payne</b> Manager, Regulatory Affairs	<b>Mark Ward</b> Chief Executive Officer	<b>Peter Read</b> Vice-President, Strategic Planning	<b>Chaim Lum</b> Manager, Procurement
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### Front Row

<b>Donelda Patterson</b> Manager, Human Resources Services	<b>Jamie Sullivan</b> Advisor, Stakeholder Relations	<b>Doug Webb</b> Aboriginal Business Liaison	<b>Colleen Legdon</b> Manager, Community Relations	<b>Lana Hill</b> Advisor, Stakeholder Relations
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Missing in photo: Kara Flynn, Vice-President, Government and Public Affairs; Greg Fuhr, Vice-President, Production, Mining; Steve Gaudet, Manager, Environmental Affairs; Dr. Tom Lawley, Chief Medical Officer.



## Our Aboriginal Relations Team

### Back Row

<b>Tara Abraham</b> Community Investment Specialist abraham.tara@syncrude.com or 780.790.6356	<b>Jamie Sullivan</b> Stakeholder Relations Advisor sullivan.jamie@syncrude.com or 780.790.6493	<b>Lana Hill</b> Stakeholder Relations Advisor hill.lana@syncrude.com or 780.790.6404	<b>Christine Simpson</b> Stakeholder Relations Coordinator simpson.christine@syncrude.com or 780.790.6405
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### Front Row

<b>Doug Webb</b> Aboriginal Business Liaison webb.doug@syncrude.com or 780.790.6357	<b>Belinda Daley</b> Senior Recruiter gauvreau.belinda@syncrude.com or 780.790.6123	<b>Colleen Legdon</b> Community Relations Manager legdon.colleen@syncrude.com or 780.790.6406
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# MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



*CEO Mark Ward lends a hand at Syncrude's annual Tree Planting Day, where family and friends are invited to help reclaim former mining land. About 1,300 tree and shrub seedlings were planted at the event held this past September.*

**Everybody needs a hero.** From the earliest age, children immerse themselves in a world of super men, wondrous women, wizards, hobbits and space adventurers. But, some of our greatest heroes can be found right here in our very own communities—role models who have either overcome great adversity to achieve tremendous success or who have dedicated countless hours to ensure the well-being of those around them.

These heroes are right here, right now, and they are all around us.

This year's issue of *Pathways* features many stories that reflect true strength and courage. Take, for instance, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final event held in Edmonton. Syncrude was proud to have supported this important opportunity for people across the Prairies to come together in a spirit of reflection, healing and hope. Our very own stakeholder relations representative Christine Simpson shares her account of the event and her own personal journey through the residential school system. To her, I cannot express fully in words my sincere gratitude for granting us a small glimpse into a very difficult childhood. Her strength and fortitude is truly inspiring.

We meet other remarkable people like Dr. Marie Smallface-Marule, founder of the First Nations Higher Education Commission of Alberta, former president of Red Crow College and human rights advocate. Also, we learn how a fish harvesting program and new Elders care centre in Fort Chipewyan are helping to uphold vital cultural traditions and preserving wisdom for younger generations.

In addition to celebrating great achievements in Aboriginal communities, *Pathways* provides an opportunity for Syncrude to report on our progress towards meeting our diverse commitments—from employment (we are currently one of the largest employers of Aboriginal people in Canada) to business (over \$2 billion spent with Aboriginal-owned companies to date). We are also the only oil sands operator accredited at the top-tier in the Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) program through the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB).

This year marks the 40<sup>th</sup> year of Syncrude's Aboriginal relations program. These four decades have been marked by successes, challenges and meaningful learnings. I look forward to being part of this continuing journey and ensuring our region's First Nations and Métis communities continue to share in the opportunities generated by our oil sands operation in the future.

I hope you enjoy this year's edition of *Pathways*. If you have any feedback or input, or know another hero who should be recognized for their extraordinary accomplishments, please let us know at [info@syncrude.com](mailto:info@syncrude.com).

Mark Ward  
Chief Executive Officer

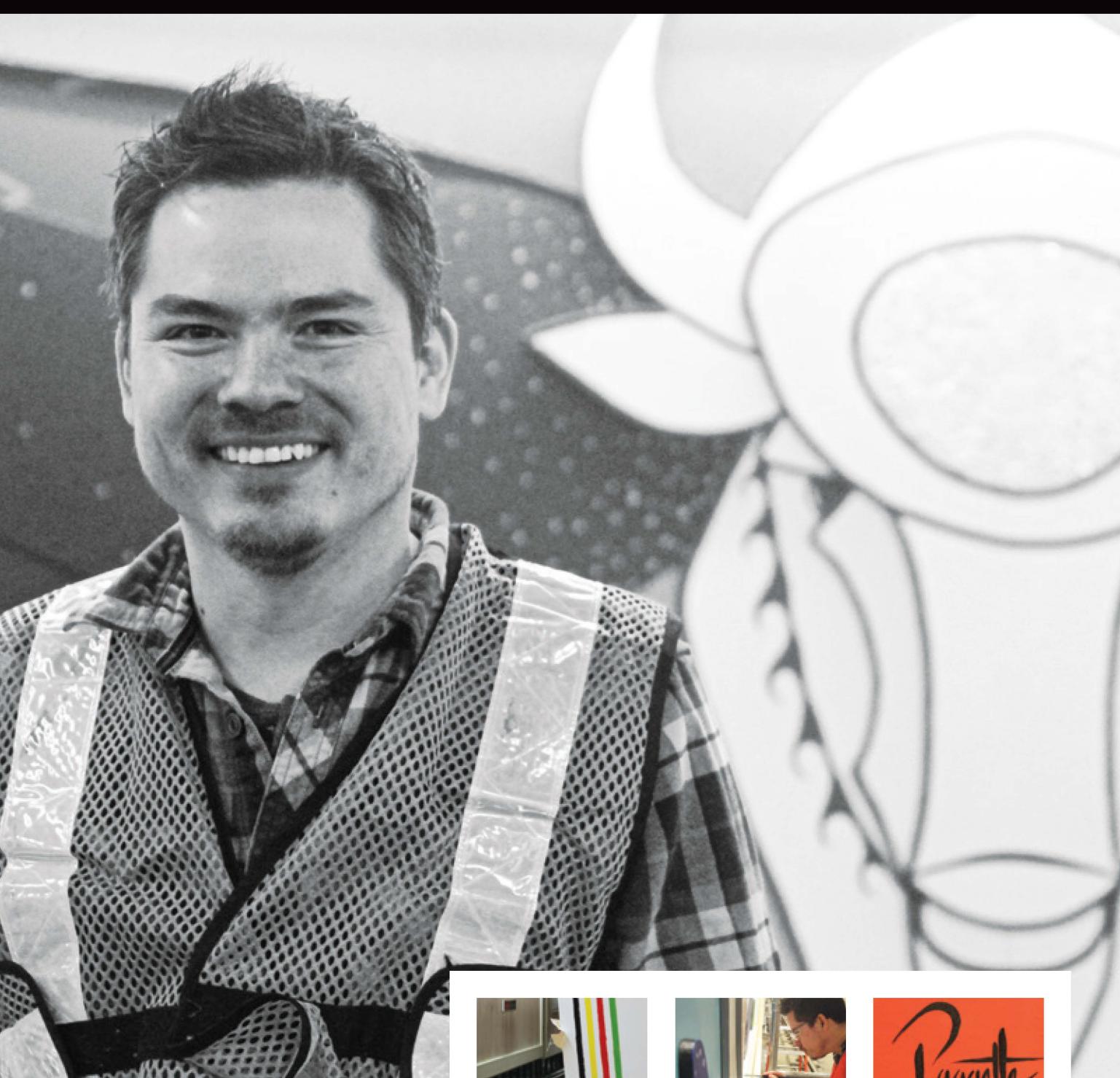


Towards Sustainable Mining  
Vers le développement minier durable



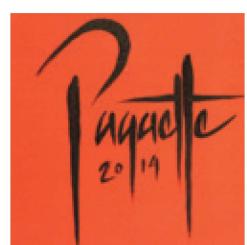
Aboriginal Human  
Resource Council

connections • partnerships • solutions



**This page:** Aaron Paquette stands in front of his large-scale art installation at Edmonton's Grandin LRT station. Called Stations of Reconciliation, the work encourages conversation and reflection, while providing a focus for dialogue on the residential school system.

**Outside back cover:** A City of Edmonton worker helps to position Aaron's creation on the wall of the LRT station.



# Syncrude

[www.syncrude.ca](http://www.syncrude.ca)

The Syncrude Project is  
a joint venture undertaking among:

Canadian Oil Sands Partnership #1  
Imperial Oil Resources  
Mocal Energy Limited  
Murphy Oil Company Ltd.  
Nexen Oil Sands Partnership  
Sinopec Oil Sands Partnership  
Suncor Energy Ventures Partnership



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