

Pathways

ISSUE NO VI SYNCRUDE CANADA LTD. ABORIGINAL REVIEW 2015



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Welcome

There are many different pathways to success. It could be sculpting a work of art, 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 not-for-profit 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 young and old are working to make a difference.

THE STORIES in *Pathways* reflect the six key commitment areas of Syncrude's Aboriginal Relations program: Business Development, Community Development, Education and Training, Employment, the Environment, and Corporate Leadership. As a representation of our ongoing 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.

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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.



COMMUNITY

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



EDUCATION

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



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.



ENVIRONMENT

We work with local Aboriginal communities on such matters as end-land use and how we can minimize the long-term impacts of our operations on traditional land uses.



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

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NORTHERN PRIDE

A small First Nation finds huge success in the oil sands.



JOE LAFOND SAVES HORSES

Veteran welder dedicates his life to helping and protecting local horses.



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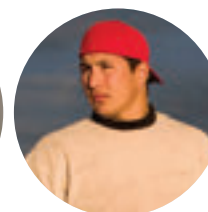
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A SMALL FIRST NATION FINDS HUGE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE OIL SANDS. BUT THE BENEFITS ARE MORE THAN JUST ECONOMIC.

NORTHERN PRIDE

It takes less than one minute to drive past the community of Goodfish Lake on the Whitefish Lake First Nation, and a good 10 minutes for the dust to settle down on the gravel road. While it's not well known, this sleepy little hamlet holds many surprises for the first-time visitor.

First, there are acres upon acres of farm land and pastures that dot the landscape of the reserve along the Range Road that leads you to Goodfish Lake. Then there are the two large buildings in the centre of the community, home to the successful Goodfish Lake Business Corporation (GFLBC).

There's definitely an entrepreneurial spirit in this community.

It can be traced back to the signing of Treaty 6 in 1876 and Chief Pakan's creation of schools so his people could be educated and prepared for the changing world. Over the years, the Whitefish Lake First Nation has looked for opportunities to participate

in Alberta's growing economy. In the early 1980s, it was dry cleaning.

"They did their research, toured dry cleaning plants in the U.S., and realized it was something we could do to get our people employed," says George Halfe, GFLBC's chief operating officer.

“AS THE BUSINESS EVOLVES, IT KEEPS US TOGETHER.”

They approached large and small businesses in the area to provide them with industrial dry cleaning services, and looked north to the oil sands for potential clients. Syncrude signed on 37 years ago and since then the list of clients has grown to include Suncor, Imperial Oil, Canadian Natural Resources and Husky Energy.

While the dry cleaning business grew, a community sewing club was having success with project work including manufacturing western wear. "Our leaders thought, 'If we're doing the dry cleaning for Syncrude, they must be buying their coveralls from somewhere,' so we approached

MILDRED Memnook



them,” says George. The garment manufacturing business was launched and today the protective blue coveralls and winter wear manufactured by Goodfish Lake is a top-of-the-line industry standard.

But dry cleaning and garment manufacturing aren't the only business ventures in this community. There's also a laundry business in Edmonton that handles linens from the northern camps, a trained wildland firefighting crew, a vehicle and rig service providing rental equipment and repairs, and a cattle ranch operation with plans to expand to 300 head.

“We're always on the lookout for new ideas,” says George.

The dry cleaning and garment manufacturing companies directly employ about 120 of the 2,000 people who live on the reserve. But, for some, a job there is just the beginning.

Deborah Favel wants to start her own business one day and her mother inspires her to pursue this dream. Deborah left the reserve and returned after getting a diploma in business administration. She is an office administrator for GFLBC.

Her mother worked in manufacturing while Deborah was growing up and she saw what it was like for families who didn't have money coming in.

“My mother showed us that if you're not going to school, you need to work,” says Deborah. “If she didn't show me how things can be, I don't think I would be where I am today. I'm proud that she encouraged me to do better.”

The benefits of having a community-owned business extend beyond employment. In fact, the business is really just a way to further empower its residents. GFLBC's earnings flow back to Band members in three



**120
OF
2,000**

**PEOPLE LIVING ON RESERVE
ARE GOODFISH EMPLOYEES**

**37
YEARS AGO**

**SYNCRUDE SIGNED
ON WITH GOODFISH**

**EARNINGS FLOW BACK TO THE
BAND MEMBERS THROUGH:**

1

**IMPROVING COMMUNITY
INFRASTRUCTURE**

2

EDUCATION ENDOWMENT

3

REINVESTMENT





CINDY Jackson

ways: community infrastructure improvement projects, an education endowment, and reinvestment.

For Band members this means security, stability and – above all – opportunity. Just ask Jeannette Breast. She's just three weeks into a new position as a transportation assistant. She manages

the maintenance and location of a fleet of trucks that pick up and deliver garments here and in Edmonton. She sees first-hand how the corporation benefits the entire community. "We're working for each other," she says. "As the business evolves, it keeps us together."



The opportunities are endless. Shaleen Cardinal left the reserve several years ago but returned to a job in the dry cleaning operation. She soon found her niche as the corporation's health and safety/EMS coordinator.

"If you look at other Nations, there aren't a lot of job opportunities. A lot of members have to venture off the reserve and leave their families," says Shaleen. "They are

gone for a long time to provide for their family, unlike here where they can see their family every night."

Everyone takes pride in a job well done. George tells the story of a time in 2005 when employees visited Syncrude to see the operation and make a connection to the oil sands.

"None of them had ever seen the massive plants and the huge equipment," says George. "They could see people wearing the Goodfish Lake coveralls, and they were proud to know that a small Nation like ours can be part of something so big." ◀

TRUTH & RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

THE ROAD AHEAD

Commission recommendations set the groundwork for a renewed relationship amongst Canadians and Aboriginal people.



Residential school survivor Lorna Standingready is comforted by a fellow survivor at the Commission's closing ceremony.



Commission chairman Justice Murray Sinclair (centre) and fellow commissioners Marie Wilson (right) and Wilton Littlechild (left).

STARTING NOW,

“we all have an opportunity to show leadership, courage and conviction in helping heal the wounds of the past as we make a path towards a more just, more fair and more loving country.”

A call for action was sent out across the country this June as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its findings on how the country can move forward from the damaging generational impacts of the Indian Residential School system.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), established as a result of the 2007 Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement, heard more than 6,750 survivor and witness statements before the release of its final report summary, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*.

The summary offers 94 recommendations, calling for meaningful and cooperative input from all levels of government, First Nations and Canadian citizens. The recommendations address health, education, justice, public inquiries, monitoring and funding. Suggested steps that are proposed include preserving language and culture, promoting legal equity, and strengthening information on missing children.

“Starting now, we all have an opportunity to show leadership, courage and conviction in helping heal the wounds of the past as we make a path towards a more



People march during the Walk for Reconciliation, part of the closing events of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

just, more fair and more loving country,” says Commission chair the Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair.

Business and industry also have a role in reconciliation. Recommendations emphasize the need for “equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.”

In addition, the commissioners highlight the importance of education, proposing new curriculum that addresses residential schools, Treaties and Aboriginal people. They also call on the government to eliminate educational gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians, to equalize education funding between First Nations children living on- and off-reserve, and to increase access to post-secondary education for Aboriginal youth.

“Reconciliation is going to take hard work,” states the report. “People of all walks of life and at all levels of society will need to be willingly engaged. Reconciliation calls for personal action. People need to get to know each other. They need to learn how to speak to, and about, each other respectfully. They need to learn how to speak knowledgeably about the history of this country and they need to ensure that their children learn how to do so as well.”

Commissioner Dr. Marie Wilson explains that at least 3,200 students sent to residential schools never returned home. “In almost a third of those cases, the student’s name wasn’t even recorded. A quarter of the time, the student’s gender was not recorded.”

Dr. Wilson further points out that the children who attended the schools were severely punished for practising their cultural ceremonies and speaking their family’s language. “Reconciliation rests on building Aboriginal culture back up, and preserving the languages and ceremonies that the schools tried to eliminate,” she says.

The report’s recommendations, or “Calls to Action,” are designed to “redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation.”

“There are many who will pull down the blinders and pretend that this isn’t their issue,” says commissioner Wilton Littlechild, “but we are calling on Canadians to open their minds, be willing to learn these stories and willing to accept that these things happened. This is not an Aboriginal issue; it is a Canadian issue.”

Syncrude was a major supporter of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s final event, held in Edmonton in 2013, which gathered further input, stories and evidence towards development of the recommendations. <

Download and read the Commission’s 380-page summary report at www.trc.ca.



Drummers pass Parliament Hill as they lead the Walk for Reconciliation.



ON THE MOVE

There's almost nothing that Fort McKay Logistics can't handle. What started as a mail delivery and shuttle service at Syncrude in 1997 has grown to include accepting and transporting anything less than 20,000 pounds destined for Syncrude from its new warehouse in Edmonton.

The company is responsible for transporting goods to and from Syncrude sites in Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Mildred Lake and Aurora. A partnership with national carrier Day & Ross Freight also gives them access to a vast North American transportation network and tracking system.

Forty employees work from a brand new warehouse in southeast Edmonton with seven loading docks including an oversized bay to handle large parts or pieces of equipment. The operation runs seven days a week, 12 hours a day. Staff receive, verify and ship everything that needs to get to Syncrude from a light bulb to a 797 engine – and ensure delivery within 48 hours of receipt. An on-demand truck provides same-day delivery service if an item needs to get to site sooner.

The Edmonton warehouse is large enough to entertain options for expanding the business. "We built our business to expand into the Edmonton area," says general manager Mathieu Leger. "Now that we're here, there are many opportunities to expand from this base into other markets."



SAFETY FIRST

The day starts with a Toolbox Talk where team leader Mike Head reviews important information with the team, safety updates, and an overview of what shipments are expected today and what will be going out.



“ We built our business to expand into the Edmonton area. Now that we're here, there are many opportunities to expand from this base into other markets. **”**



TRACY RUSSELL AND

JOANNE LACORDE

**CHECK & VERIFY**

Technicians like Tracy Russell verify the contents of any package or pallet to make sure the contents match the shipping information, and that nothing is missing or broken. As long as goods are coming into the warehouse, technicians are working.

**CHECK & VERIFY AGAIN**

Bigger loads like large parts or pieces of equipment are placed in the yard, but they also undergo the same check and verification process that happens in the warehouse. Here, Tom Parsons checks on a load of large parts that are destined for the Syncrude site.

DISPATCH

Dispatch coordinates deliveries that enter the warehouse. The dispatch team receives daily reports that tell them where goods are and when they are expected. John O'Connor uses this information to schedule incoming and outgoing shipments.



DIRECT CONTACT WITH VENDORS

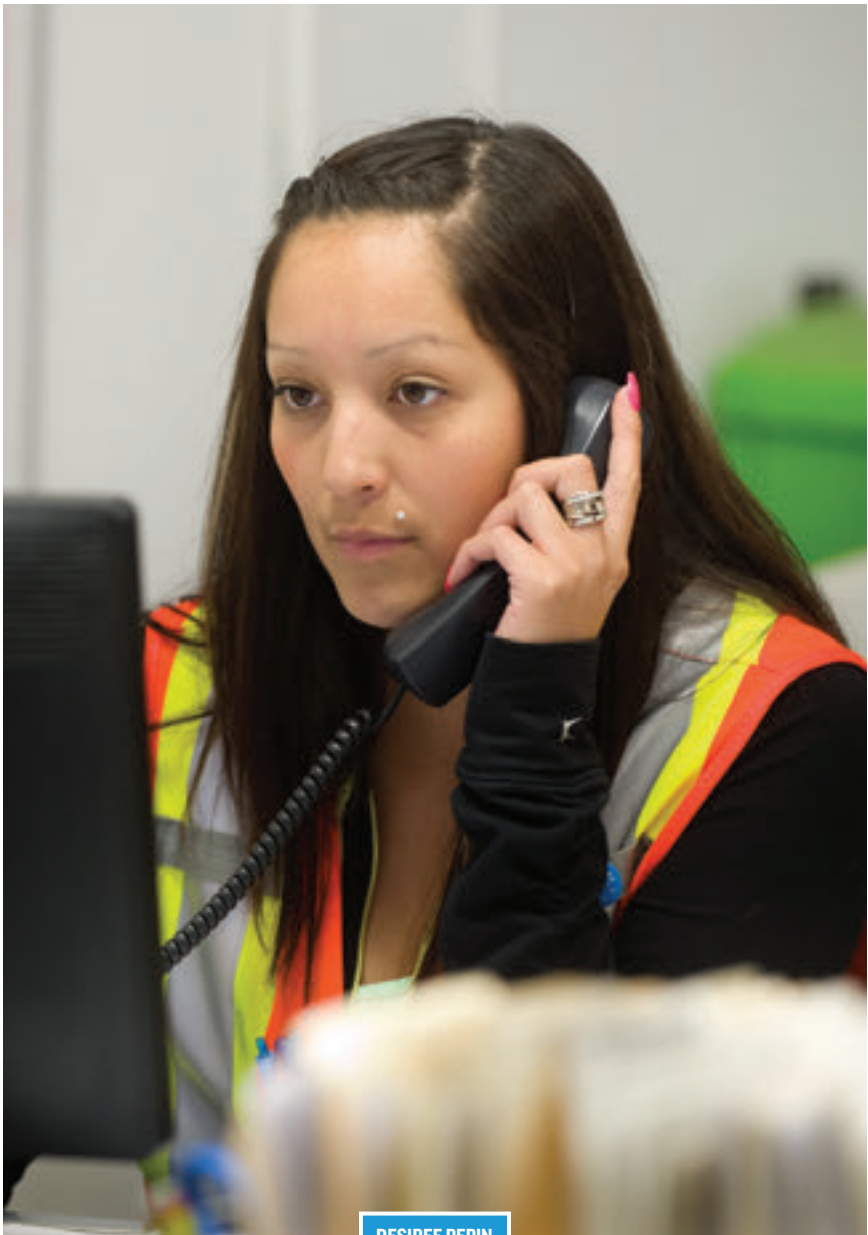
If an order is incomplete or has missing or broken parts, a technician will deal directly with the vendor to address the issue and ensure that replacements will be sent to complete the order. The order is sent on to Syncrude when the replacements arrive.



JOANNE LACORDE

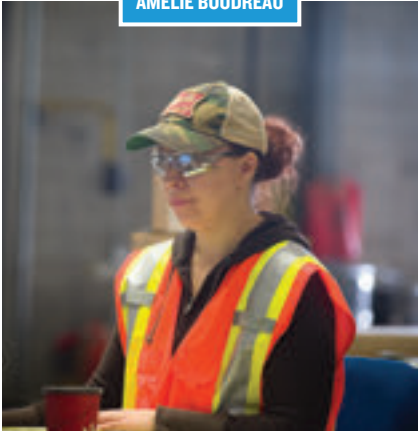


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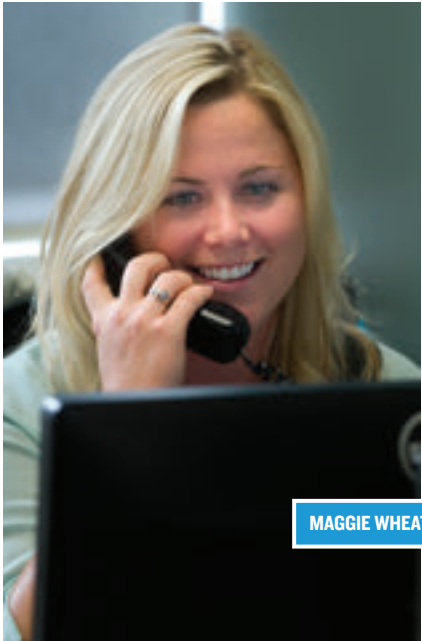


DESIREE PEPIN

AMELIE BOUDREAU

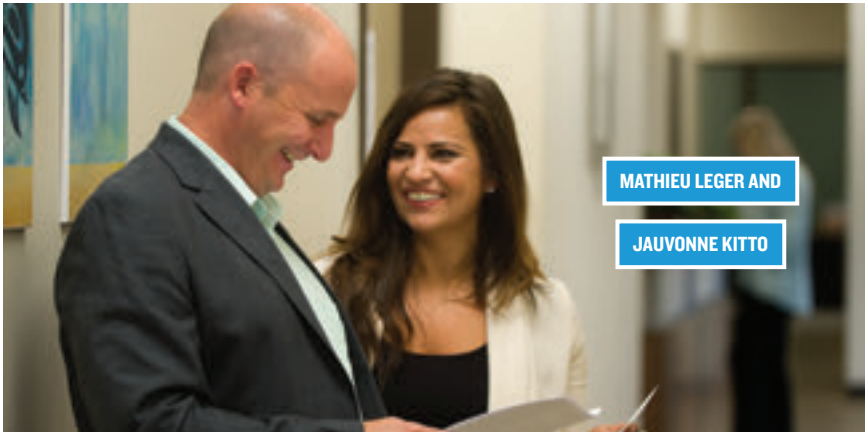


MAGGIE WHEATON



MATHIEU LEGER AND

JAUVONNE KITTO



FRONT OFFICE

Mathieu Leger and Maggie Wheaton ensure the management and administrative aspects of the operation are looked after.



INSPECTION

Throughout the day, inspected and approved items are placed in laydown areas and on pallets.



READY TO SHIP

Supplies for Mildred Lake are prepared throughout the day and loaded into a trailer. Goods are placed in the order they will be offloaded. A fully loaded trailer can hold up to 40,000 pounds.



READY TO ROLL

Fort McKay Logistics sends between five to eight loaded trailers to Fort McMurray each night. Drivers like Neil Flett drop loads at numerous points. There are 411 drop points on the routes, including Fort McMurray, Mildred Lake and Aurora.



JOE LAFOND IS A 37-YEAR VETERAN WELDER AT SYNCRUDE.
ON HIS DAYS OFF, HE CAN BE FOUND WITH HIS HORSES
AT TOUR NORTH RANCH IN FORT MCMURRAY.



WHEN AN ANIMAL CAN'T FIND ITS VOICE

there are people in this world to speak for it. One of those people is Joe Lafond.

"I can remember my Dad telling me stories about my grandfather. He used to stand up for animals and not tolerate any abuse," says Joe, a 37-year Syncrude employee, originally from Leask, Saskatchewan.

The stories Joe heard of his grandfather taking the law into his own hands when a horse was in trouble stuck with him. It can be seen in the way he runs his labour of love, Tour North Ranch. Through the ranch, Joe and his wife Nicki hold an annual rodeo and give back to the community through their philanthropic work. For close to 30 years it has been the central hub for local horse enthusiasts and a haven for horses.

"I get calls from bylaw or the SPCA at two in the morning to rescue horses and bring them back to the ranch for safe keeping," says Joe, a member of the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation.

Joe recalls rescuing a mare and its week-old foal six years ago after they were attacked by a pack of dogs in a rural community. To help cover the veterinary and medical fees, Joe and Nicki bought the two horses from the SPCA and let them heal at the ranch.

Another rescue in 1993 left Joe with a steel plate in half his face. He was airlifted to Edmonton and laughs about the incident now.

"It really is a funny story," he says. "After trying to help a horse stuck in mud and close to a ditch, it jumped and let both back feet go, and one foot made contact with my face. When my partner who was helping me saw the blood, he passed out. Luckily another fellow showed up to call the ambulance. The horse ended up okay."

The Wood Buffalo region is no stranger to fires, and Joe was one of the first people to respond as Fort McKay was threatened a few years ago.

A HORSE IS GOOD THERAPY.
IF ALL ELSE FAILS, GO TALK
TO YOUR HORSE.

”

"The first thing rescuers did was pull all the people out. I called the SPCA and asked, 'Has anyone thought about the animals?'" he says. Joe worked with the right people to ensure dogs, goats and horses were out of harm's way.

This year Joe was tested with one of his biggest rescues yet.

"I was coming from Edmonton and my son phoned me about an out-of-control fire on Tower Road, where many people keep horses on their land," recalls Joe. "I told him to do whatever it takes and get them out of there."



JOE LAFOND

has operated Tour North Ranch for close to 30 years.

"If you want to have an animal, you have to take care of it," says Joe Lafond.



JOE'S SON raced to his truck and trailers, and took off to help until Joe was home to assist. Because of the ranch's annual rodeo, it was set up perfectly to house more than 20 horses. He fed, watered and treated the horses as his own until it was safe for them to return home a few weeks later.

"You don't question people. You don't ask for credentials. There is life involved," he says. "My horses eat before I do. If you want to have an animal, you have to take care of it."

Just as his grandfather did for him, Joe continues to pass along important life lessons to his two children, five grandchildren and first great-grandchild.

"They are the greatest gifts on earth," says Joe. "Whatever their interest is, I'll support it. But I've always taught them how to treat an animal."

For Joe, one of the most satisfying parts of his life are his horses, and the relationship the animals create with their owners.

"You don't stand between a lady and her horse. That's a special bond and it's nice to have that," he says.

"A horse is good therapy. If all else fails, go talk to your horse." <



FOR MORE THAN TWO DECADES, SYNCRUDE AND THE FORT MCKAY GROUP OF COMPANIES (GOC) HAVE WORKED COLLABORATIVELY TO RUN THE COMMERCIAL BISON RANCH ON RECLAIMED LAND AT BEAVER CREEK, HOME TO APPROXIMATELY 300 BISON. SYNCRUDE PROVIDES MORE THAN 300 HECTARES OF LAND AND THE FORT MCKAY GOC OPERATES THE RANCH.

EACH YEAR, THE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATES IN A LOCAL BISON HARVEST. THE EVENT IS A WAY FOR THE ELDERS OF FORT MCKAY TO SHARE TRADITIONAL TEACHINGS TO THE YOUNGER GENERATIONS. THE BISON MEAT IS GIVEN TO COMMUNITY ELDERS AND MEMBERS WHO REQUEST IT.

FROM PREVIOUS YEARS' HARVESTS, FOUR BISON SKULLS WERE CLEANED AND PRESERVED. ARTIST FRED MCDONALD SMUDGED THE BONES WITH SWEET GRASS AND PAINTED EACH SKULL, GIVING THANKS TO THE BISON FOR ITS LIFE.



1

DAY + NIGHT

Fred worked with the idea of night and day, and utilized important symbols throughout.

The sun above the tipi shows there is life within. The shaman pictured also has a connection to the bison, represented by the line from its heart to the animal. He sings a song for the bison. The raven also has great meaning.

“Ravens are always important for me. People look at ravens as scavengers or bringer of death,” says Fred. “They are spiritual entities that go between our world and the Creator’s world, taking messages back and forth. They are some of the most intelligent animals in the world.”

The four colours show the full cycle of life. White is spirit from the north, green is the birth spirit, red is the spirit of growth, and black represents death and the continuing cycle.



2

THE SPIRIT ENTITY

The yellow orbs represent the connection we have with our spiritual world, during the day and night. This piece focuses on spirit entities and our connection to animals.

“If you’ve ever seen a picture of Sitting Bull, you’ll see him with a butterfly design on his clothing. That is his spirit entity,” says Fred. “Butterflies are hard to catch. He was wearing the image at a time when he was escaping.”

Fred used the image of the bear tracks and thunderbird to represent strength and spirit.

“The thunderbird was an important part of this piece. Many would consider the strength of the thunderbird to be the same as the strength of Jesus Christ. It’s the same connection with spirituality and home,” he says.



3

JOURNEY GUIDE

A journey needs a guide for it to be successful. The Big Dipper and North Star are both symbols that provide direction.

The turtle also represents the strong spiritual connection with the continent of North America. Fred explains there is an old Ojibway legend about how the land was created.

“A turtle, duck and beaver were all floating in the middle of the ocean, and were all getting tired and needed a place to rest. The beaver thought he could dive down to the bottom of the ocean and bring up some soil for their own piece of land, but he was unsuccessful. Next, the duck thought he could bring up the soil, but he couldn’t reach it either. Finally the turtle dove to the bottom and brought up soil, creating North America.”



4

MUTUAL RESPECT

The bison tracks are side-by-side with the bear paws. Despite being natural enemies, they live with mutual respect for their power and strength.

The two bird symbols hold the drum in the middle, with sound escaping. “They are singing a heart song for the community,” explains Fred.

The use of three stars is also significant as they represent the trinity: Father, Son and Holy Ghost.



FRED McDONALD
Artist

PATHWAYS Q&A

CHIEF RON KREUTZER + BRAD CALIHOO,
FORT MCMURRAY #468 FIRST NATION

WHEN

Chief Ron Kreutzer thinks about the future, it's with a strong appreciation of the past. Hundreds of years ago, ancestors of the Fort McMurray #468 First Nation supported the fur trade as guides and advisors. Now, the oil sands industry is bringing in a new era of economic opportunity and he is determined the knowledge of his people can once again play a key role. Here, Chief Kreutzer and #468 CEO Brad Calihoo share their thoughts on progress, collaboration and success.



CHIEF
RON KREUTZER



WE WANT TO BE INDEPENDENT AND TAKE CARE OF OURSELVES, rather than rely on transfer payments from government. We're located in the economic engine of Canada. We have the greatest opportunity ever and we will take advantage of it for the benefit of everyone in our community.



HOW HAS THE OIL SANDS INDUSTRY AFFECTED THE FORT MCMURRAY #468 FIRST NATION?

CHIEF KREUTZER Every piece of land here is taken up by leases, so it is a struggle to practice our traditional way of life. You just can't go out wherever you used to anymore. But industry has also brought us plenty of opportunity that can benefit our community and enable us to be more engaged.

CALIHOO The impact of industry is both good and bad. But at the end of the day, industry's here. Oil's too important in this world; we'll never stop oil production in this region and we believe that. But, that's not a free pass to produce however you want. We're still going to hold industry accountable when it comes to developing it in a responsible way. We are just asking to be part of it.

HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE RESPONSIBLE DEVELOPMENT?

CALIHOO That's a huge question. For us, the main priorities are the environment, land use and reclamation. As the people of the land, we will still be here when development is complete and the oil companies have gone. Without the land, we're in trouble. And I believe that's not just an Aboriginal perspective – it's a Canadian perspective. I don't believe Aboriginal people in this region are asking anything more than a person who lives in Edmonton or somebody in Ontario. It's just about being environmentally responsible. We only have one Earth. We only have one chance at this. Why not do it right?

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE INDUSTRY'S CURRENT PERFORMANCE?

CALIHOO Is reclamation happening at the rate it needs to? Probably not. But, saying that, Aboriginal people can assist. They know the traditional plants, they know the animals, they know the land better than anyone. So why not harvest that knowledge?

Really, it's about involving First Nations people right from the first shovel. Industry can continue to improve by involving them more. But don't just look at the science side – take advantage of the traditional perspectives as well. Seek the knowledge of people who have been here forever.

WHAT DOES TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE MEAN TO YOU AND YOUR FIRST NATION?

CHIEF KREUTZER Traditional knowledge comes from people like my mother and the generations before her. My grandparents, for example, used to go hunting and wherever you killed a moose, the whole family would move there. And that's where they stayed until the meat was dried. They didn't have freezers back then, so that's how they would preserve it and bring it home. They lived by the lake here and the meat would keep them through the winter.

When I first moved to Anzac, there were no roads to Fort McMurray. There was just a railroad. We've seen a lot of changes since then, but the Elders' knowledge still remains. There is so much to be learned from them.

OTHER THAN EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, HOW ELSE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE ABORIGINAL PEOPLE PARTICIPATING IN THE OIL SANDS?

CHIEF KREUTZER It goes back to the value of traditional knowledge. Why not have Aboriginal people, from the local region or elsewhere, go in and have a look and see what they think. Get our people out there and we can share our perspectives with those who need it. Our Elders are willing and able to assist industry. We have a lot of history and knowledge to share.

CALIHOO We're not saying that science is bad, but let's use traditional knowledge as well. Why don't we turn over every stone we possibly can to ensure that our environment is going to be protected?

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR THE #468 FIRST NATION?

CHIEF KREUTZER We have some pretty big visions and I believe we will change history across Canada when it comes to First Nations' prosperity. We want to be independent and take care of ourselves, rather than rely on transfer payments from government. We're located in the economic engine of Canada. We have the greatest opportunity ever and we will take advantage of it for the benefit of everyone in our community. ←



REALLY, IT'S ABOUT INVOLVING FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE right from the first shovel. Industry can continue to improve by involving them more. But don't just look at the science side – take advantage of the traditional perspectives as well. Seek the knowledge of people who have been here forever.



**BRAD
CALIHOO**

#468 FIRST NATION

Located 45 minutes southeast of Fort McMurray on the shores of Gregoire Lake, the **Fort McMurray #468 First Nation** consists of about 700 members. The traditional language spoken is Woodland Cree.

ART TELLS THE STORY



IN A SMALL WORK BAY IN THE CENTRE OF AN INDUSTRIAL PARK IN SOUTH EDMONTON...

Artist Jason Carter was commissioned by Syncrude to create an artwork commemorating its 50th anniversary. The painting, *A Remarkable Bison*, is seen here (below right).

Jason Carter is looking over a large shipment of raw stone, spraying some of them with a fine mist to reveal their true colours, and imagining the possibilities that will come when he starts carving. He's not sure what he'll do with it, but he can't wait to release the story within.

It's a long way from when Jason created his first sculpture from a brick-sized piece of soapstone.

"It was a gift from my sister and I used it to prop open a door at my apartment until I took a screwdriver and a wrench to it and created a raven," says Jason. "I fell in love with it and it's changed my life completely and directionally ever since."

Nearly a decade later, Jason's paintings, sculptures and books are found in art galleries, public spaces and private collections around the world. His gallery and work space in Canmore is frequented by locals and tourists who snap up his work almost as quickly as he can make it.

Jason, a member of the Little Red River Cree Nation, grew up in Edmonton and started a career in television production before he discovered art. His first solo exhibit was *Who is Nanabozho?* in 2008. Nanabozho is a character in the Ojibwa culture that is used to tell morality tales to children. Trickster characters are familiar to many Aboriginal people, including the Mi'kmaq and the Cree.

Jason used his research into the trickster rabbit to reconnect to his culture, and in the process introduced us to a world of animal characters from many lands that cross paths with a rabbit named Boo. Jason's art is featured in three books about Boo that he and creative partner Bridget Ryan have produced.

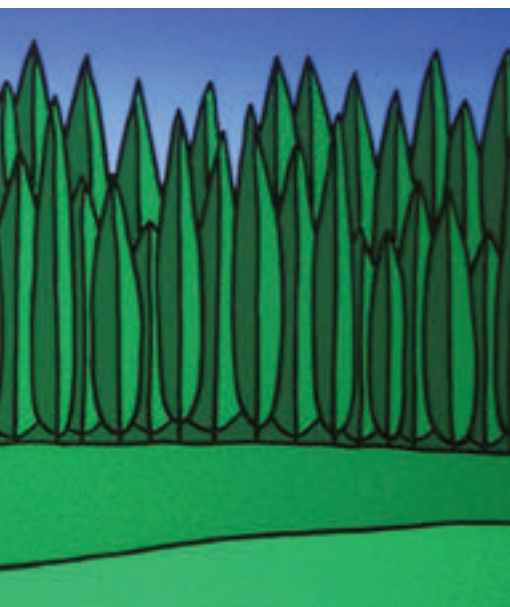
While his early work was heavily influenced by Aboriginal culture, today his influences come from the world around him. "I'm constantly exploring designs with animals that make me smile or laugh," says Jason. "I like to create art that I think is funny and people will enjoy."

In 2012, with his work much in demand, Jason left television to focus on his art.

Since then he has created a number of pieces that you can find in public places around the province. He created the *World of Boo* exhibit for the Art Gallery of Alberta which ran from July 2014 to April 2015, with support from Syncrude. His massive mural *Old Man Mountain with Great Mother Bear* stands above the entrance to US Customs and Border Control at the Edmonton International Airport. A recent piece was completed for the South LRT Extension in Edmonton, and Jason will soon unveil a new 10-foot sculpture called the *Red Warrior* at MacDonald Island Park in Fort McMurray.

Jason was also one of four artists commissioned by Syncrude to create art commemorating the company's 50th anniversary in 2014.

"I'm blessed to be able to do this every day," says Jason. "I get to play, make things up and share my work for people to enjoy." ←



FAMILY TIES



From great despair can arise great achievement

The tragic loss of her sisters at an early age gave Nicole Bourque-Bouchier the determination to make the most of each day. Her efforts are indeed making a difference. Today, she and her husband Dave are the owners of the Bouchier Group, one of the most successful companies in Wood Buffalo. And while Nicole, a member of the Mikisew Cree First Nation, is well regarded across Canada, she remains proud to live and raise her family in Fort McMurray.

Congratulations on recently being named one of Alberta's Most Influential People and receiving the Celebration of Achievement Award from Alberta Women Entrepreneurs.

It's always very flattering when someone nominates you for these awards. I like to take part in them because I believe my participation is building the awareness of Aboriginal women in business, especially in non-traditional areas, throughout Canada.

Why is contributing to the community important to you?

Fort McMurray is where I was raised. I went to school and college here and my husband Dave was born in Fort McKay. It's where we raise our family and it's home for us. I think if you're in a position to give back to the community, it makes such good sense to do that because it is a place we are raising our children.

You've said one of the biggest misconceptions is that Aboriginal businesses get more opportunity than non-Aboriginal. What do you want to say to dispel those myths?

Certain opportunities present themselves to Aboriginal businesses that maybe wouldn't have presented themselves otherwise. However, it's still up to the business owner to be able to deliver a safe, quality, competitive service. We might be thrown in the bucket with four larger companies, but we still have to work hard for what we get. It's just not given to us.

If you could have dinner with one person, who would that be and why?

My sister Michelle. She committed suicide while I was in Grade 12 and it was a big tragedy that changed my life. I wish I was able to get to know her more.

I take pieces from everyone that I've known and I really try not to have one single role model because I feel that may be limiting. I think you can learn a lot from many people and you have to keep an open mind about it.



You go above and beyond in your business and community involvement. Where do you get your drive from?

It would definitely be the passing of my sisters. So many people get hung up in the bad and it becomes their crutch in life. Their deaths were not for nothing and I am making the best of my life. Knowing that I have my sisters watching me, I want them to be proud.

Also, I want to be a role model for my children. I want them to know they can dream big and have anything they want. They have to believe in themselves. Just because you grow up in a small town like Fort McMurray and you feel you get labeled as Aboriginal doesn't mean you can't have an education and what you want.

You are also a role model for female entrepreneurs. Any advice you would like to share with aspiring business owners?

I can't tell you the number of times in my early days when I was the only female in a room full of hard hats sitting around a table. No one paid attention to me because I was a woman and they figured I wouldn't know anything about construction. There is definitely a lot you have to prove. I always knew that it would come with time and I just had to do what I do: put in the hard work, make the best of it and the rest would work out, which it definitely has.

You have to earn respect, you don't just get it. A lot of new business owners need to understand that you have to put in that time and do that hard work to earn the respect.

I do feel there are a lot more female Aboriginal business owners than we've ever seen that belong to organizations like NAABA (Northeastern Alberta Aboriginal Business Association) compared to where we were 15 years ago.

What is the most rewarding part of your day?

Giving back to the community makes us very happy. Fort McMurray has been very good to us so it's about giving that back.

As a company, it's rewarding to work with the people we do every day, many of whom are Aboriginal and local to the region. Being part of a positive environment, seeing them grow, and knowing we're employing Aboriginal people is very fulfilling. <

PICTURED CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Nicole, husband Dave and children Keegan, Brayden, Blaize and Michelle.

MISSING FROM PHOTO: daughter Kandis.

First LIGHT



*Aboriginal astronomer looks to tradition
and technology to inspire youth*

ASTRONOMER

Rob Cardinal grew up fascinated by science and space. Inspired by the stories he read in Omni magazine, he was always drawn to the marvel of our solar system.

"When you're looking up at the beautiful sky and you see a meteor, a comet or an aurora, and you see the stars and the galaxy, everyone gets that same sense of wonder and amazement," says Rob, now a planetary scientist.

Unfortunately, Rob's outlook on life wasn't always so bright. As a youth, he experienced periods of darkness, desolation and depression.

"I had already learned how to hate my Aboriginal heritage by the time I was an adolescent," admits Rob, who is Blackfoot and Cree. "That is a terrible thing for a young person."

At 15 years old, Rob's life went off the rails. He began hanging out with the wrong crowd, skipping school, drinking and doing drugs. Rob was only able to turn his life around thanks to the care and encouragement of his family and community, as well as news that he would soon be a father.

"I never had a father growing up, so I made the decision my children would never be without theirs," he says.

Rob completed treatment and went back to school to upgrade his education. After earning good grades in math and science, he was encouraged to pursue a degree. In 2000, Rob graduated from the University of Victoria with a Bachelor of Science in Physics and Astronomy.

A research associate in the University of Calgary's Faculty of Science, Rob hopes to use his experiences to inspire Aboriginal youth. In partnership with the RCMP Foundation and Syncrude, Rob will officially launch the First Light Stay in School Initiative later this year. The goal is to create awareness and develop a passion for science and technology among Aboriginal youth through exposure to telescopes and astronomy.



Rob cherishes the feather that was given to him by his mother at 15 years old. He has kept it ever since as a symbol of his culture and perseverance.

“Ancient stories tell us we come from the sky, and from a scientific view, that’s absolutely true. We are made of the same material that the sun is made out of. The stars are our grandfathers and grandmothers; they lead us with curiosity and wonder.”

The idea originally came to Rob after he discovered a pair of comets while developing software and computers to support a space mission.

“Nowadays, professionally, it isn’t that big of a deal,” says Rob. “But to the people around me, especially a very good spiritual mentor of mine, she thought that it was amazing that an Aboriginal Canadian had found a comet and had their name on it. That is really where First Light comes from.”

Rob’s mentor reminded him that he had been given his life back and now it was his responsibility to share his story and help however he could.

First Light strives to encourage and enable the keepers of traditional knowledge to engage with younger generations through technology and science. It aims to blend traditional and modern knowledge to encourage education and instill a new sense of wonder and pride in

Aboriginal communities. More than two dozen telescopes are expected to be placed in several Aboriginal communities across the Wood Buffalo region by the end of the year.

“Ancient stories tell us we come from the sky, and from a scientific view, that’s absolutely true. We are made of the same material that the sun is made out of,” Rob says. “The stars are our grandfathers and grandmothers; they lead us with curiosity and wonder.”

Rob hopes First Light will expose Aboriginal youth to the thrill of science and technology, while also rediscovering more of their traditional and cultural heritage.

“It’s all energy when we’re looking out there and I feel a deep connection to it,” says Rob. “In Aboriginal culture, every single thing that you have is a gift given to you by the Universe, by the Creator.”



BLAZZING

HER OWN WAY

HEART PUMPING,
SWEAT DRIPPING
AND ADRENALINE
FLOWING - THAT'S
HOW CYNTHIA
COURTEOREILLE
WORKS, BOTH ON
THE JOB AND IN
COMPETITION.

Last year, the Syncrude Fire Brigade Team 504 Captain and FireFit competitor travelled to Longueuil, Quebec, and took home one of the FireFit National Championships' top honours, winning a bronze medal in the ladies over-40 individual category with a time of 5:02 minutes.

"Last year was the first year I did individual events, so it was quite the accomplishment," says Cynthia, who has competed in Syncrude team categories since 2007.

Describing herself as someone who enjoys challenges, Cynthia has seen her share. She worked hard and achieved her Grade 12 diploma at 30 years old, and went on to start a career at Syncrude operating the world's largest trucks and mining equipment. Cynthia is a single mom, juggling shift work, Fire Brigade,

competition and home life, but keeps her goals in mind.

"I go home after work dead-tired, throw in my video and get a workout in," says Cynthia, who has always enjoyed fitness. "You have to make time, even if it's only a half-hour. It's my time to better myself and clear my mind. It's cleansing for me."

Her two kids, 17-year-old Mason and 12-year-old Megan, are their mom's biggest fans, and also her pride and joy.

"My kids love watching the competition. At a regional event this year, my son said to me 'You had a pretty good hustle, but next year I want to see you hustle harder,'" laughs Cynthia.

She's clearly set a good example. Both of her children are active and enjoy fitness.

Mason is a red belt in Taekwondo, and attended an Aboriginal entrance program to the Canadian Forces this summer. Megan is passionate about dance and participates in five different classes including ballet, hip hop and jazz.

"If I lead an unhealthy life my kids are only going to follow," adds the Mikisew Cree First Nation member. "You want your kids to be a better version of yourself."

Continuing to challenge herself, Cynthia spent three years on the Fort McKay Volunteer Fire Department team. Now as Captain of Syncrude's Team 504 Aurora Fire Brigade, Cynthia can be called to an emergency any time during her 12-hour shift.

"I've always been fascinated with fire; there's always a challenge," Cynthia says. "The rush of adrenaline starts when you're



**"YOU WANT YOUR
KIDS TO BE A
BETTER VERSION
OF YOURSELF."**

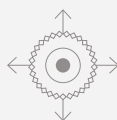


running into an emergency. You push your body until you're exhausted. I love that feeling of accomplishment."

As one of a few females competing in Canadian FireFit, Cynthia will always continue to push herself. She hopes to eventually become a full-time member of Syncrude's Emergency Response team, and plans to continue testing her mind and body with the competition she loves.

"FireFit is like anything else; it's a challenge and I like to push myself," she says. "I'm lucky that I love my job. It allows me to work, compete, be home with my kids on days off, and live comfortably. Being a single mom, you can't ask for much more." ↵

A REWARDING JOURNEY



Many grown adults have difficulty leaving the nest for the first time, let alone a 13-year-old teenager. Leaving her hometown to pursue education in Fort McMurray, Marty Quintal understands the commitment it takes to achieve big things.

Born and raised in Conklin, Alberta, the school in Marty's community at the time provided classes for students up to Grade 8. Following in her sister's footsteps, she took the unnerving move to leave her mom, dad, siblings and familiar surroundings to work towards her high school diploma.

"It was normal but it was tough," says Marty. "That's when a lot of kids drop out because you're 13 and leaving home. You don't want to be away from your family."

Similar to advertising in a newspaper, the school division searched for Marty's temporary home. Throughout this process she never knew where she would stay, but considers herself lucky because of the families she's lived with.

"In Grade 10 I met a family from Scotland with a daughter the same age as me. We hit it off and they took me under their wings," she explains. "They're like family and we're still close to this day."

Following her graduation from Father Patrick Mercredi High School, Marty attended Keyano College and not long

after, began working as a labourer with Syncrude. Getting along well with people and being a hard worker, Marty was offered a permanent position as an instrumentation technician. Over the years, she has had several different roles within the company, spending the majority of her time in the Process Control and Automation department. In February, she celebrated 25 years with Syncrude.

"The years have gone by in the blink of an eye," says Marty. "There are so many opportunities and because our operation is so huge, there is always something new to learn. It's been very interesting." In her new role as Aboriginal recruitment advisor, Marty is amazed by the good-hearted people willing to help. "It's not just saying it – people's hearts are in it. They are eager to employ Aboriginal people. I'm excited to work with our region's Aboriginal communities to continue this work," she says.

Her now 13-year-old daughter – the same age as when Marty made her big move – was recently recognized as Female Athlete of the Year. It's an achievement Marty views as attainable because of the opportunities Fort McMurray provides her family. ➔

If interested in exploring a career with Syncrude, please contact Marty Quintal, marty@syncrude.com at: 780-790-6123 or e-mail:



"THERE ARE SO MANY OPPORTUNITIES and because our operation is so huge, there is always something new to learn," says Marty Quintal, Syncrude's Aboriginal recruitment advisor.



Blueberries and BOAT TRIPS

BORN IN FORT MCMURRAY, LORI CYPRIEN WAS ONLY A FEW DAYS OLD WHEN SHE AND HER SIBLINGS TRAVELLED HOME TO FORT CHIPEWYAN ON THEIR GRANDPARENTS' HOMEMADE BOAT.

"My grandmother always laughs that I was four days old going home on a boat, and that's why I love the environment so much," says Lori, who is now the site lead for Syncrude's Reclamation and Closure research team.

As a child and teenager, Lori recalls being a "bush kid" and would spend hours playing in the woods or swimming in the lake.

"My dad has a trapline so we'd spend most of our summer in the bush at the cabin. That was our vacation and I loved it. There weren't any Disneyland trips or anything like that," adds the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation member. "At the cabin I remember always trying to be the first one up, just so I could make the fire with the burning embers from the night before."

Along with the fun, there were always chores, including gathering food. Special trips around Lake Athabasca were made to gather berries.

"I had to pick a small bucket of blueberries before I could go swimming," remembers Lori. "My dad used to fill up his hat with blueberries and help fill my bucket so I could go play faster. When we got home from berry picking, we'd get one fresh bowl with cream and sugar, and my mom would freeze the rest to make jam, pies and blueberry buckle."

Coming to Fort McMurray from Fort Chipewyan was a big-city experience for Lori, and before starting high school she only made the trip a few times each year. Trips always included a stop at Boston Pizza and a visit to the movie theatre. The city was always different from the home she was used to.

"I was so shocked when I saw blueberries at the grocery store for the first time. I said, 'What! You can buy these?'" she laughs.

At a young age, Lori recognized her interest in the environment and decided it was a career path she wanted to pursue. Needing specific science courses in high school, she moved to Fort McMurray and lived with her sister while attending Father Patrick Mercredi High School.

"As a kid I wanted to write about the rainforest and the trees. I used to joke that I would make it to the rainforest and chain myself to the trees so they wouldn't be cut down. I did my school reports on these types of things," she says.

Living with her shift-working sister proved to be too much freedom for the teenager, and after skipping classes with friends, Lori was sent home.

"I knew I wanted to get into the environmental stream, so I smartened up and was given another chance to enroll in biology, physics and chemistry at Father Merc," says Lori. "I graduated from there, and went on to do a year of upgrading at Keyano College to finish the sciences."

In 2001, Lori started as a general summer student in Syncrude's Mining department, and after completing a year at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT), she came back the next summer as an Environmental Services summer student.

"The late Bev Davies was my manager at the time, and she was a great mentor. I wasn't sure what stream I wanted to pursue. With her help, I realized the research stream, and getting out into the field is what I wanted to do."

Lori was hired on with Syncrude on a two-year term position after her NAIT Biological Sciences – Renewable Resources diploma was complete. She was fortunate to be hired on permanently with the commitment that she would return to school to earn her undergrad. Lori successfully earned her Bachelor of Science in Natural Resources from Thompson Rivers University.

"When I first started my career I was torn, especially being in the environmental field. I was afraid people would judge me for working here, and I didn't know what side of the table I was on," explains Lori. "I later realized there is no side of the table. I'm here to help everybody. I understand the importance of reclamation here, and I understand the perspective of the community and the harm they're seeing done to the land, which we're all connected to."

In her early years with Syncrude, Lori describes herself as being shy to tell people where she worked.

"It was an internal struggle. I was always afraid of what people would say. But over the years I found my voice, and realized my presence here reminds the researchers and scientists why their work is so important," she adds. "By sharing my stories about going home for Treaty Days, or my dad going moose hunting, they realize that people depend on this. It reminds them of the importance of putting the land back to a sustainable state."

Continuing to learn and develop is a life-long pursuit for Lori, and in 2015 she graduated with a Master of Science in Environment and Management from Royal Roads University.

Now starting a family of her own this year, Lori hopes to pass down her childhood experiences to her son.

"I'm hoping to let the kid run around and explore the woods like I did. I hope he's going to be a little bush kid too," laughs Lori. "Maybe we'll pick blueberries one day." ←



**"MY PRESENCE
HERE REMINDS
THE RESEARCHERS
AND SCIENTISTS
THE IMPORTANCE
OF PUTTING THE
LAND BACK TO A
SUSTAINABLE STATE."**



**LORI AND HER PARENTS
CELEBRATE HER GRADUATION
FROM ROYAL ROADS
UNIVERSITY.**



Nursing students Sara Voyageur (above) and Shai Wylie appreciate the opportunity to sit down and listen to a lifetime of stories as told by residents at the Kahkiyow Keykanow Elders Care Home in Fort Chipewyan.

For Shai Wylie and Sara Voyageur, compassion isn't just part of the job. It's a way of life.

It is said that we learn from those who have walked the path before us. Two nursing students in Fort Chipewyan are giving back to the people who walked the path before them, by nurturing and supporting the community's Elders.

Shai Wylie and Sara Voyageur both made the decision to put their newly-learned skills to good use at the Kahkiyow Keykanow Elders Care Home this summer, after completing their first year of Nursing at Keyano College.

"When I was younger I lived with my grandma, Marjorie Glanfield," says Shai. "She always taught me to respect my Elders and value what they say. I also worked with the Mikisew Elder Care program and got to visit Elders in their homes, see how they were doing and keep them company."

For both students, it felt natural to come back home for the summer after completing their first year of studies in Fort McMurray.

"I always knew I wanted to get into the health field, and I get a lot of motivation to keep going from my family and the community," says Sara. "Getting experience in the Elders Care Home is really rewarding. My favourite

part is getting to know each and every one of the residents."

Elders Care Home director Cookie Simpson is no stranger to the healthcare field or the community either.

"I was born in a little tent in Doghead and grew up in the community. I know every single person occupying a room. I can speak Cree to the Elders and we understand each other. They're my Elders and I just love them," says Cookie, who has more than 30 years of experience in the health industry. "We're so happy to have two nursing students with strong ties to Fort Chip. They'll continue with their education, and their experience allows them to



Elder Ernest Courtoreille and nursing student Shai Wylie

BOTTOM LEFT: Elder George Vermillion

BOTTOM RIGHT: Director Cookie Simpson and Syncrude stakeholder relations coordinator Christina Simpson



come back to the community and help others. Having Shai and Sara is like a breath of fresh air for the residents.”

Although the Mikisew Cree First Nation members are paid to perform nursing duties, their presence extends far beyond a job description. From craft-time and bingo, to listening and hand-holding, the students continue to assist the residents in many ways.

Shai understands first-hand the impact a caring atmosphere can make. “When I had my baby, the nurses at the hospital really made a difference. I wanted to become a nurse after that,” says the mother of a four-year-old daughter. “I really think you get better faster, depending on the nurse you

have. It’s about more than just doing your job – it’s actually caring about the person behind the patient.”

Throughout their time at the home, the two students sometimes feel like they are the ones receiving the care.

“My parents taught me to respect my Elders,” says Sara. “They are wise and there is so much we can learn through their eyes.”

Shai is thankful for the advice she’s received from the residents. “Some days I feel like I’m the one getting assistance. It’s like a give-and-take relationship,” she says. “The Elders have taught me to always work hard, no matter what. It helps with what I’m going through, raising my daughter

and going to school full-time. You have to be compassionate and strong. If I work hard and stay focused, I can do that.”

On any given day, many people can pass through the Kahkiyow Keykanow Elders Care Home: resident family members, employees, community leaders, school groups, friends and many more.

“I feel like I’m doing what I’m supposed to be doing. When I’m able to help my community, I hope it will inspire other young people to do the same,” adds Shai. “I really want to make the residents’ lives better while they’re here. They’ve done so much for the community, it’s only fair we can do a little for them.” ◀

NHL player Jordin Tootoo laces up his skates on world-class rinks, but feels most at home on the Arctic ice where he grew up.

Straight north from Hudson Bay lies the town of Rankin Inlet, a community with less than 3,000 people nestled in the Arctic Circle in Nunavut. Jordin grew up living off the land with his father, mother and two older siblings.

"When you're a kid, you're able to be a kid," recalls Jordin, currently playing right wing with the New Jersey Devils. "That's one thing I cherish the most – being able to spend days on the land enjoying the peace and harmony."

Since the time they could walk, both Jordin and his brother Terence donned skates. Their father first taught them how to play hockey. "My dad was more of a

SCORIN



goal scorer. My mom is Ukrainian; I think I get my fight from her," he says.

Terence was a role model in Jordin's life from an early age, both on and off the ice. Both of them dreamed of making it to the big leagues.

"As a kid, it was tough to watch my parents' addiction to alcohol. A lot of weight was put on my brother's shoulders," he says. "But everyone knows everyone in the Arctic. You can't show weakness. We grew up in an environment where not a lot was said."

He's been in the limelight for years, but now even more since his transformation to sobriety. Adjusting to the status of role model has taken time to get used to. Being in the public eye, Jordin is sometimes scrutinized.

"People look at me and say 'you're lucky, you have everything.' No, it doesn't work that way. I seized every opportunity I could get," he says. "Rehab gave me my career back. I've learned to treat myself with respect, and love myself first and foremost."

G IN LIFE

JORDIN TOOTOO has overcome personal struggles to win at the game of life.



THE CANADIAN PRESS IMAGES/Larry MacDougal

At 14 years old, Jordin left home to pursue his dream of playing in the National Hockey League (NHL). After what he calls "a lot of little steps" he continued to climb the ranks in Canadian junior hockey. Jordin and Terence were forces to be reckoned with on the ice, and they were both making names for themselves. But it was only five years later that his life took a harsh turn.

"The biggest challenge I faced was losing my brother at 19 years old," Jordin says. "We used alcohol to forget about everything. He was supporting our family and that weighed on him. It was a heavy battle to fight."

Jordin continued down a spiraling path of alcoholism, and fighting his demons while continuing to show his talent on the ice. He ultimately achieved his goal of playing in the NHL in 2003, but it would take another seven years until Jordin made the decision to change his life.

"On December 18, 2010, I started my road to rehab. I had just partied for two days straight and knew it was my time. It was going to take over my hockey career and win the battle. I was 27 years old and playing in the NHL. I felt invincible, like the world revolved around me. My mindset was that money would always be here. The cycle would have continued; feeding the fuel of alcoholism and living like a rock star. Going to rehab was the best decision I ever made."

Jordin understands that everyone deals with pressure differently, and admits to using hockey as an outlet to relieve life's pressures. Since publishing his book *All the Way: My Life on Ice* in 2014, Jordin has spoken to thousands of youth across Canada in hopes of providing inspiration and support in the Aboriginal community.

Jordin's message has even reached the Wood Buffalo region. During Fort McKay Hockey Week in early May, Jordin spoke with around 600 Aboriginal youth from Fort McMurray, Janvier, Conklin, Fort McKay and Fort Chipewyan. The event was supported by the Fort McKay Hockey Society and companies such as Syncrude, and was part of Mental Health Awareness Week.

During such engagements, he opens up about his struggle with addiction, his brother's suicide, and making positive choices.

"Be kind to everyone. Everyone is fighting a fight you know nothing about," he says. "It doesn't matter where you come from; it's up to you to make those choices. Be proud of who you are."

For all the places he's travelled, the fans he has acquired, the obstacles he's overcome, Jordin stills feels most at home on the Arctic ice.

"I now understand the meaning of life; living on the land. This is where I find happiness." ◀

"It doesn't matter where you come from; it's up to you to make those choices. Be proud of who you are."

EXTRAORDINARY EXISTENCE

*If a List was
Published*

OF THE MOST INSPIRING
ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

IN ALBERTA

*One Person's
Name*

WOULD BE NEAR

THE TOP



Photo: The Alberta Order of Excellence

An athlete, lawyer, politician and international statesman, Willie Littlechild has helped change the lives of people across the globe.

Born on the Ermineskin First Nation at Maskwacis in 1944, Wilton (Willie) was raised by his grandparents, Chief Dan Minde and his wife Mary Jane, alongside seven sisters and three brothers. He credits his grandparents' advice and wisdom for much of his success.

"My grandfather schooled me in the traditional and cultural ways of our people; my grandmother was a great believer in education and she made certain that my grades were kept up, he explains. "She was right, of course, because education is one of the reasons why I have been able to realize some success in life.

It wasn't easy. At the age of six, Willie was removed from his home and put into the residential school system where he spent the next 14 years. Though he experienced and witnessed many tragic scenes of abuse, he prefers to focus on the positive experiences which have helped him to heal and recover. One of those is his love of sports.

"Life might have continued to take a negative turn, but when I found sports, it was the beginning of a new era for me," he says. "I was saved by sports.

Sports helped him get into the University of Alberta and, once there, he quickly excelled as an athlete and coach, and started up the first all-Aboriginal hockey team in the province. Willie also played on the Golden Bears hockey team, was a member of swimming teams and was

the manager of football and basketball teams. He graduated in 1967 with a Bachelor of Physical Education degree and returned in 1975 to complete his Masters. In 1976, he graduated with a law degree and the following year set up an office on the Ermineskin Nation. He also met his future wife Helen through sports and they've shared 48 years of marriage, which Willie notes is his greatest accomplishment.

Still an avid sportsman and athlete, Willie has won more than 70 provincial, regional, national and international championships. He was also a founder of the North American Indigenous Games, and was selected as a torch bearer and ambassador for the 2010 Olympics.

"It was a proud and shining moment for me; to stand there surrounded by some of the finest athletes in Canada and others from across the world," says Willie. "It was truly a great honour.

Willie also reflects upon another special moment when the Cree Nations at what was then known as Hobbema, now Maskwacis, honoured the young lawyer by presenting him with the headdress of an Honourary Chief and by endowing upon him the name of his grandfather, Mahihgan Pimoteyw, or Walking Wolf.

"Recognition comes via a variety of ways but when you are honoured and recognized by your community, your Elders and peers, there is no greater honour," he says.

Willie's energy has no bounds. He was one of the commissioners with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of

Canada, a role he undertook for six years, and has worked with the United Nations Human Rights Council and Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. He is also a representative of the International Organization of Indigenous Resource Development, a founding member of the Indigenous Initiative for Peace, the chairperson for the Denver Text of the OAS Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and a member and VP for the Indigenous Parliament of the Americas. In Canada, Willie was the first Treaty Indian Member of Parliament. He served a five-year term from 1988 to 1993, representing the riding of Wetaskiwin, Alberta, and was a parliamentary delegate to the United Nations.

"When the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted, it was one of the proudest moments of my life and I believe one of the most important documents I have ever been involved with," says Willie, who was recognized for his lifetime contributions at the 2015 Indspire Awards, supported in part by Syncrude. "I was involved in the process for 27 years so to see it finally be adopted by the United Nations was very exciting.

For a person who has inspired so many, who inspires Willie? "My inspiration comes from my family, especially my grandchildren," he smiles. "I tell them the same things I tell my children – 'stay positive and never be afraid to challenge yourself.' Remember that winners don't quit and quitters don't win. Having a spiritual base along with the cultural, physical, and mental elements are very important to us all. Stay focused and realize your goals. <



PAUL SMITH
UNTITLED, 2011
INK AND ACRYLIC
ON PAPER
ARTIST'S COLLECTION

"This exhibit is very much about people trying to find their way in the world," says the Art Gallery of Alberta's Shane Golby, who manages and liaises with the exhibit's curator. "The art is a manifestation of their experiences and their ancestors' experiences and how they interpret those. They all take different approaches but are all tied together by the overall theme of finding their own way – as we all have to do."

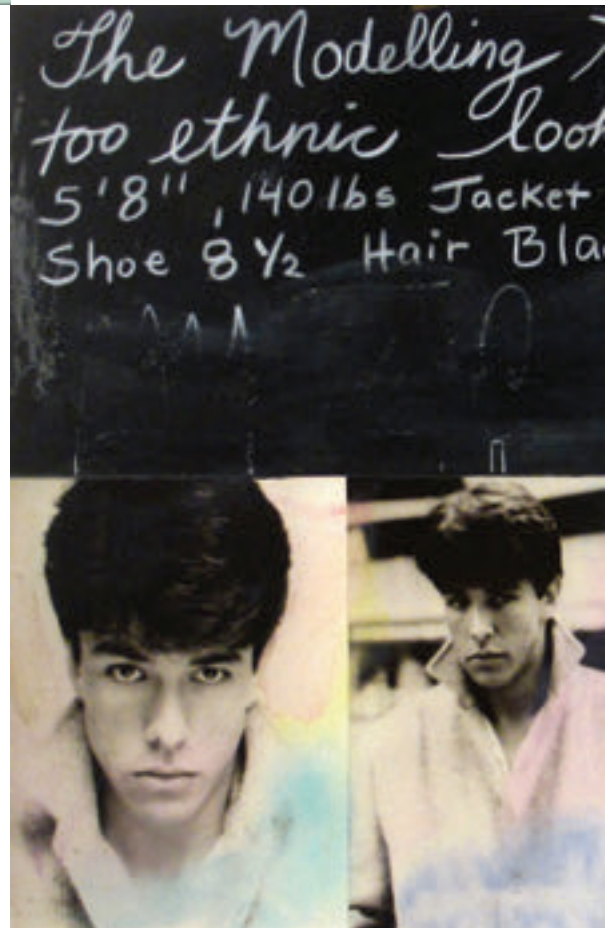
The three artists – George Littlechild, Amy Malbeuf and Paul Smith – each bring unique talents to the collection that examine the past, personal life experiences, and contemporary issues and realities.

A VISUAL JOURNEY

TRAVELLING ART EXHIBIT PROVOKES THOUGHT AND REFLECTION



"Art is a truth that reveals illusions." This statement from Aaron Paquette, curator of *Wayfinders*, a new travelling art exhibit, sets the stage for a collection that features the perspectives of three distinctive Alberta Aboriginal artists.

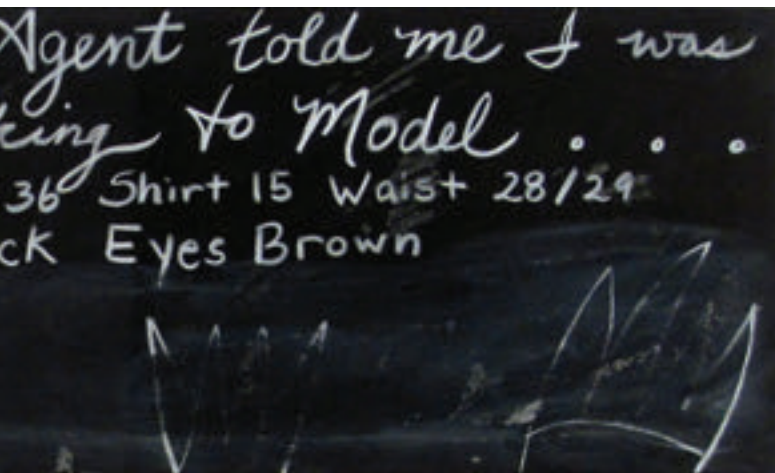


AMY MALBEUF
GHOST OF A CARIBOU, 2014
SINEW AND CARIBOU HAIR
AND ANTLER ON ELK HIDE
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



"George Littlechild's pieces are motivated by a drive for self-understanding and self-healing; Amy Malbeuf relates with the environment and shows, through art, her perspective on the decline of the caribou population and the impacts it has on Indigenous people; and Paul Smith, with his interest in graffiti art, chose the trickster rabbit as his comic alter-ego and uses it to find his own way," says Shane.

All combined pieces showcase a compelling exhibit that Aaron hopes will have lasting impact. "The journey is personal but when light is held high, it can inspire us to do the same. Our Wayfinders are just like us, leading the way by simply trying to find one," he explains.



The Syncrude-sponsored exhibit, which is organized by the Art Gallery of Alberta for the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, is part of the Travelling Exhibition Program (Trex) that moves art collections throughout the province to provide residents access to art in their home towns. The program services about 60 venues in more than 35 communities.

Wayfinders was showcased this summer in the Wood Buffalo region at Heritage Park. ←



GEORGE LITTLECHILD
TOO ETHNIC LOOKING
TO MODEL, 2001
MIXED MEDIA ON CANVAS
COLLECTION OF
THE ARTIST

A TRIP FOR A LIFETIME

Sometimes a bus ride simply takes you from point A to point B. Other times, it can take you to destinations you never dreamed were possible.

Indeed, when 14 Aboriginal youth from Wood Buffalo travelled to the Indspire Awards and youth career conference in Calgary this past February, the bus door opened up to reveal new ideas and possibilities. The trip and free attendance was provided by Syncrude to students from Father Patrick Mercredi and Composite High Schools.

The Indspire Awards celebrate the contributions of Aboriginal people in Canada who demonstrate outstanding achievement and serve as invaluable role models. The youth conference exposes youth to new careers and post-secondary education opportunities, while meeting industry professionals.



Composite High School student Tehya Massan and her father Jeffrey attended the annual Indspire Awards. "It's about accepting the challenges and not letting anything get in the way of your dreams," says Tehya.



"I really liked hearing the inspiring stories. I've had personal hardships throughout high school just like many of the speakers, and it's amazing to see how far they've gone in life," says Tehya Massan, who attended the conference with her father, Jeffrey, and graduated from Composite High School this year. "It's about accepting the challenges and not letting anything get in the way of your dreams."

"It was electrifying," describes Jeffrey, a Syncrude process operator. "Both the students and I had no idea what we were in for. I think it opened a whole new world for these kids."

Jeffrey was thankful for the opportunity to chaperone the event, and believes the students walked away with a greater connection to their roots. "On the bus ride down everyone sat spread out, but on the way home the students were clustered

together, bonding over their experience," he says. "The diverse Indigenous cultures the kids were exposed to were phenomenal and let them know the opportunities out there for them."

A report released by Indspire this year shows that 93 per cent of Indigenous students who receive funding for their education earn a post-secondary credential, and 82 per cent of those graduates find work. Indspire is the largest funder of Indigenous education outside of the federal government.

Syncrude supports the annual Indspire Awards, which helps raise funds that deliver educational programs and provide the necessary tools for the advancement of Indigenous people in Canada. ←



CONGRATULATIONS MRS. ELSIE YANIK

Beloved Métis Elder receives Indspire 2015 Lifetime Achievement award

Still very active at 97, Métis Elder Elsie Yanik was honoured with the 2015 Indspire Lifetime Achievement award for her 80 years of work helping others.

She's been a nurse's aide, minister, mentor and volunteer. She's also been a tireless promoter of health and education, as well as a fierce advocate for the preservation of Aboriginal culture. She advises Keyano College and teaches classes at Fort McMurray's Golden Years Society.

Above all, she's known for the kindness offered to everyone whose life she has touched.

We think that's a life worth celebrating and extend heartfelt congratulations to Elsie on this well-deserved recognition.

WOOD BUFFALO REGIONAL LIBRARY

BRIDGING CULTURES



Libraries help to enlighten a community and are often the backbone of culture and learning. The Wood Buffalo Regional Library is no exception and is taking big steps to enhance outreach and inclusion with Aboriginal communities.

One area that has received rave reviews is the Total Aboriginal Cultural Corner which showcases the region's diverse culture and history. Opened in late 2014, it has been a gathering spot for important programming such as the Aboriginal Speaker Series.

Sponsored by Bouchier Group of Companies, and in collaboration with Métis Local 1935, the Aboriginal Speaker Series helps to tell important stories about the region. In June, a panel discussed the ongoing research project, *Mark of the Métis: Traditional Knowledge and Stories of the Métis People of Northeastern Alberta*, an initiative proudly supported by Syncrude.

Aboriginal Speaker Series organizer and adult services librarian Nicole Greville's goal is to preserve information that could be lost, while creating awareness, knowledge and engagement for all ages and backgrounds. She credits the new Aboriginal Cultural Corner with providing the right atmosphere for events such as this.



MAIN PHOTO: Métis Elders Mary Sykes Cardinal and her brother Harvey Sykes

MIDDLE: Adult Services librarian Nicole Greville

BOTTOM: Vintage artifacts and storytelling tools

"I have a big vision," says Nicole, an Iroquois from the Six Nations Reserve in Ontario. "We want our rural and urban Aboriginal communities to see the space and know they have a dedicated area to feel comfortable and respected. We want to make sure we represent the culture, knowledge and history appropriately."

Features include the Regional Library's entire First Nation, Métis and Inuit collection, local art, traditional pieces and a central location in the library for children and youth to get involved with Aboriginal arts, crafts and story time.

"It's great to see the community get involved. Through our Aboriginal initiatives, we've gained some invaluable relationships," adds Nicole. "Recently, an Elder donated a lynx figure to display in the Aboriginal Cultural Corner. Trapping is a huge part of our history, so we were extremely honoured to have a piece in our library to showcase."

Although physically located in Fort McMurray, the library offers programming in Fort Chipewyan and Anzac, and in local schools. As well, Fort Chipewyan residents can access materials online or by mail.

"We are really excited to launch this program with Fort Chipewyan. We want to be fully representative and provide equitable access for all our region's residents," says Nicole. "The people of this region are our backbone." ◀

For more information on the Wood Buffalo Regional Library, visit www.wbri.ca/.

LEARNING FROM THE LAND



In Fort Chipewyan, the skills students learn in the bush are just as important as the ones they learn at a desk.

Since 2014, cultural programs at the Athabasca Delta Community School (ADCS) have been helping to take the kids out of the classroom and into the field, while getting back to the community's roots. Based on the curriculum for each grade, trips are tailored for each class and their education requirements. Cultural liaison Kendrick Cardinal is proud to see so many hands-on skills passed down.

"They're learning the traditional way of life. This is the way life used to be; this is how we lived," says Kendrick, who grew up in the bush with his grandparents in Fort Chipewyan. "For some kids, wilderness skills have been passed down from parents and grandparents, and others are learning for the first time."

Students from Grades 3 to 12 have gone out on the land and participated in lessons about wilderness safety, netting, trapping, picking sweet grass, tracking, cutting fire wood, cleaning and skinning meat, making dry fish,

and much more. Two highlights from this year were the Grades 8 and 9 five-day camping trip to Camp Voyageur, near Turtle Lake, and a fishing excursion to Jackfish Lake.

STUDENTS AT THE ATHABASCA DELTA SCHOOL LEARN IMPORTANT TRADITIONAL SKILLS SUCH AS NETTING AND MAKING DRIED FISH.

"Some students have a hard time understanding theory in school work," says Kendrick. "With hands-on learning they can comprehend easier while learning through the land. When we bring them back to the classroom for the theory part, it makes sense after seeing it first-hand."

Aligning with this new way of learning, the school's computer lab is being renovated to a multimedia room in time for the 2015/16 academic year, with support from Syncrude. A three-year agreement

for \$100,000 will provide funding for renovations and technology upgrades. School principal Kerri Ceretzke believes it is essential to capture, archive and continue evolving with the land-based learning opportunities.

"Taking these land-based moments, whether in video, pictures, audio or GPS coordinates, to develop movies, art, internet radio, 3D print outs and more, is very exciting to the whole school community," says Kerri. "The skills the students learn working with technology will help them develop critical knowledge and skills for future post-secondary and career opportunities."

ADCS has more than 230 students from Kindergarten to Grade 12, and an outreach school. Kendrick is looking forward to the adventures of the next school year.

"We want our students to choose to be in school and like coming," he says. "It's been a tough process but it's slowly working. It's about finding different ways of learning." <



BACK ROW L TO R SYNCRUDE VICE PRESIDENTS MIKE DALEY, GREG FUHR, JIM RICHARDS, CHRIS WOLFE

FRONT ROW L TO R FORT MCKAY GROUP OF COMPANIES' JIM CARBERY, TANYA SOLOMONE AND MATHIEU LEGER; SYNCRUDE CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER PABLO BORGINO

RISE **TO THE**



A strong commitment to safety has netted a local business major accolades. Earlier this year, the Fort McKay Group of Companies received recognition for Most Improved – Large Company at Syncrude's annual safety awards. The ceremony honours Syncrude business areas and contractor companies for achieving improved or maintained safety performance.

This is the first time the Fort McKay Group of Companies has achieved the Most Improved Award, although two subsidiaries of the company have been recognized in the past – Fort McKay Logistics once received the Small Contractor Award, and Fort McKay Strategic Services received an award recognizing 10 years without a recordable injury at the Beaver Creek Wood Bison Ranch.

Jim Carbery, former CEO of the Fort McKay Group of Companies, credits the implementation of the Loss Prevention System (LPS) for

the gains they've made on safety. LPS is a system that uses behaviour-based tools and management techniques to prevent or reduce losses.

"We put a lot of focus on safety in the past year because we needed to improve, not just at Syncrude but other sites," says Jim. "We looked at every aspect of our operations from administration to the field and the results to date have been excellent."

Employees are being trained in LPS and it is being implemented within the many subsidiary companies that make up the Fort McKay Group of Companies. Transparency with suppliers and clients is a big part of the improvement. The main focus of the team is keeping communication lines open with all stakeholders and addressing the root causes of failures.

"Our people believe in the system and we're prepared to put the time and effort into implementing it across the board," says Jim. ←



Doug McCoy, Acden (right) and
Doug Webb, Syncrude (left)

A PROVEN ASSET

Years of hard work have led to success and diversification for Acden, the business arm of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation.

Originally named Denesoline Environment, Acden was created in 1994 after Syncrude donated a light duty truck that enabled their first contract: to provide Syncrude with on-site waste collection services. "We have since grown to employ over 3,000 people across 18 unique companies under the Acden umbrella," says Doug McCoy, chief operating officer with Acden.

Today, six of those companies provide Syncrude with waste management, vehicle maintenance, welding and fabrication, catering and janitorial services.

"We're proud of our partnership with Acden," says Doug Webb, Syncrude's Aboriginal business liaison. "They're a local company who understands our business, can relate to our community

and is efficient in servicing our needs." In fact, Acden's Bee Clean unit earned a Syncrude Safety Award in 2014 for the most improved safety performance in the small contractor company category.

Acden also recently built a new LEED gold certified office building that serves as its Fort McMurray headquarters. Says McCoy, "We wanted a building and service shop for our employees and customers that is healthy and safe. The complex was designed with them in mind."

McCoy believes Acden's relationship with Syncrude has been both positive and supportive. "We are excited for what the future will bring and are committed to ensure our business relationship with Syncrude continues," he says. ←

Business volume with
Aboriginal-owned
companies
increased by
55% in
two years.



2012 **2014**

RECORD SPEND OF \$228.2 M
ACHIEVED IN 2014

\$2.2 B CUMULATIVE
TOTAL

SYNCRUDE INCREASES BUSINESS WITH ABORIGINAL SUPPLIERS

Syncrude's keen focus on finding more opportunities for regional Aboriginal businesses is delivering results.

"We're very interested in working with local firms, as they tend to be among our best and most loyal suppliers," says Doug Webb, Syncrude's Aboriginal business liaison. "The Aboriginal business community, in particular, has a lot of potential for growth, which is why

we're looking to identify specific service and supply opportunities for them within our organization. It's a win-win for everyone."

If you have a company with a product or service that might be of interest to Syncrude, contact Doug at webb.doug@syncrude.com or 780-790-6357.

Syncrude is also involved in supporting the work of the Northeastern Alberta Aboriginal Business Association (NAABA), which provides networking, mentorship and learning opportunities to its members. Visit www.naaba.ca

SHARING CULTURE THROUGH THE TIPS OF THEIR TOES



**MÉTIS DANCE TRIO
WOWS AUDIENCES
—AT—
WOOD
BUFFALO
DEBUT**



SAGKEENG'S FINEST
gained country-wide recognition when
they won *Canada's Got Talent*.

L to R: Dallas Courchene, Brandon Courchene
and Vince O'LANEY

Sharing his culture with others has always been important to Vince O'LANEY, one of the members of the dance trio Sagkeeng's Finest.

Since Vince was nine years old, Elders from his home community of Sagkeeng Reservation in central Manitoba taught him, his brothers and friends the traditional jig. Just a few short years later, his dance troupe formed for the first season of *Canada's Got Talent* and won over audiences with their blend of traditional Métis jigging and modern clogging and tap dancing. The group took first place out of more than 11,000 other hopeful contestants.

Whether they are jigging to a fiddle in a traditional Métis dance or stomping to the latest hip hop hit, Sagkeeng's Finest attract widespread attention and applause. Their performances in the Wood Buffalo region were no different when Syncrude brought them in to perform at the company's Aboriginal Day Celebration and at local schools earlier this year.

Hundreds of students and spectators from Beacon Hill School, Good Shepherd Community School, Dr. K.A. Clark School and Father Turcotte O.M.I. School cheered and danced along with the group. Some even participated in tutorials. "We're always pleased to perform in schools because it's part of sharing our culture and the students always are great audiences," says Vince.

Vince states the group, who do about 100 shows a year, couldn't be happier. "We are very proud and we're doing what we love to do." ←

★ WONDER WOMAN

Scholarship recipient hopes to make a difference in her community

Meet Summer Morin for a brief moment and you might pass her off as shy, quiet and reserved. But spend a few minutes with her and you'll learn she has the drive to achieve whatever she puts her mind to.

Summer is a member of the Enoch Cree Nation west of Edmonton and is one semester away from completing the Business Management Diploma Program at Macewan University. She is also the first recipient of the Stephen Mandel Aboriginal Business Award from Macewan University.

Syncrude provides an endowment for the award to recognize and support the efforts of Edmonton's former mayor to ensure the long-term success of Aboriginal people living in the Capital Region. The scholarship is awarded to a full or part-time First Nations, Métis, or Inuit student enrolled in any program in Macewan University's School of Business.

But school was definitely not in the picture when Summer started Grade 10 – a year she admits got off to a rough start. She didn't like going to class much and skipped a lot of classes.

"I was on a really bad path," says Summer. "But I got it together for Grades 11 and 12 including honours



**SUMMER MORIN IS THE FIRST RECIPIENT OF THE STEPHEN MANDEL
ABORIGINAL BUSINESS AWARD FROM MACEWAN UNIVERSITY.
THE AWARD IS SUPPORTED THROUGH AN ENDOWMENT FROM SYNCRUDE.**

in Grade 12 Math. I got my diploma and was ready to go."

She wanted to continue her education but, like many high school graduates, didn't know what to do next. That's when her father stepped in. As a graduate of a business management program, he knew the opportunities that can come with these skills, and he became a major

influence on her decision to pursue a post-secondary education in business.

Yet her father wasn't the only one who saw potential. Summer's performance in a summer job last year turned into a year-round position.

"For someone as young as Summer it's impressive to see how dedicated she is," says Jessica Dorion, finance manager at the Enoch Housing Authority where Summer works as a financial clerk. "We have a growing finance department and I saw it as an opportunity to bring her on and grow with us. I didn't want to lose her."

A flexible work schedule allows Summer to pursue her education, keep her position with the housing authority and apply her learning right away. The scholarship motivates her to continue her education. She's on the ground floor of a great career in business – one that she hopes will build to include leading a large corporation. In the meantime, Summer has her sights set on a Commerce degree and is keen to use her skills to strengthen her community.

"This award is proof that I can achieve whatever I set my mind to," says Summer. "I know that if I work hard enough for something I truly desire, great rewards will follow." ←

MILLWRIGHT APPRENTICE

JORDAN CARDINAL GAINS ON-THE-JOB EXPERIENCE AS PART OF THE COMPANY'S COMMITMENT TO ABORIGINAL TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT.

AS PART OF THEIR NEW ECHO NORTH BUSINESS, LLOYD AND MELANIE ANTOINE TRANSPORT SUPPLIES UP THE ATHABASCA RIVER TO FORT CHIPEWYAN. PICTURED HERE, LLOYD AND DECKHAND MARTIN MARTEN.

POWER TEAM

LOCAL BUSINESS OWNERS RECOGNIZED FOR COMMITMENT TO ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT

Melanie and Lloyd Antoine understand how it feels to need mentorship at a new job. The duo took a chance five years ago when they devoted themselves full-time to their business, A.P.E. Maintenance. Starting out with Lloyd as their only millwright, the two were determined to grow their business and provide opportunities for other Aboriginal people. Last year they were recognized provincially for accomplishing just that.

"One of the mandates for me when we started the company was to get local Aboriginal people embedded in our company," says Lloyd. "Part of that was the opportunity to offer apprenticeships."

The Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board named A.P.E. Maintenance the Top Employer of Aboriginal Apprentices in 2014, an award Melanie says is an honour.

"It was nice to be recognized for something that was one of our main objectives because it wasn't an easy

road for us when we started our company," explains Melanie. "For the first two years, A.P.E. operated part time and we had the odd job here and there. We were ready to actually quit and give up, then we landed our first full-time contract and we've been going ever since."

In January 2014, A.P.E. started their first apprenticeship program, offering opportunities to millwright and instrumentation apprentices. Lloyd describes it as one of the biggest milestones for them and the company.

"We wanted to do it for so long. We kept mentioning to everyone about taking apprentices at the site, saying: 'what about apprentices?' and they would say: 'it will come in time,'" he says. "We were pretty excited when our first apprentice started. That's big for a company as small as we are, and it's been so successful."

While they help up-and-coming Aboriginal people in trades, they also

give back to where they came from. Lloyd is on the Northeastern Alberta Aboriginal Business Association Board of Directors and Melanie is the Board Chair of the Northern Lights Health Foundation. They have also been mentors with the Father Patrick Mercredi High School Aboriginal entrepreneurship program and, for the past three years, provided their assistance to the annual Santa's Anonymous event in Fort Chipewyan, where they are both originally from.

"We try to get involved in the community as much as we can," says Lloyd. "We treat people the way we want to be treated."

A.P.E. has recently purchased Wil-con Steel Works Ltd., adding new services to their growing company. They say one of their many goals is to have a repair and rebuild shop as well as more apprentices to integrate into the workforce. ←

FOCUSED ON THE

FUTURE

LOCAL ABORIGINAL STUDENTS ENCOURAGED TO "IMAGINE WHAT'S POSSIBLE"

When you're young, anything seems possible. But as you get older, oftentimes dreams can be lost or seem unattainable. A new program launching in the new year hopes to tackle these obstacles and offer local youth new insights on reaching their goals.

Developed by Syncrude, the *Imagine What's Possible* initiative hopes to raise awareness of the important role education can play in both personal and career success. Aboriginal people represent one of the country's youngest and fastest growing demographics. Of the nearly 1.5 million people in Canada who identify themselves as Aboriginal, nearly half are 24 years of age or younger. That's expected to result in a substantial increase in their share of Canada's job sector over

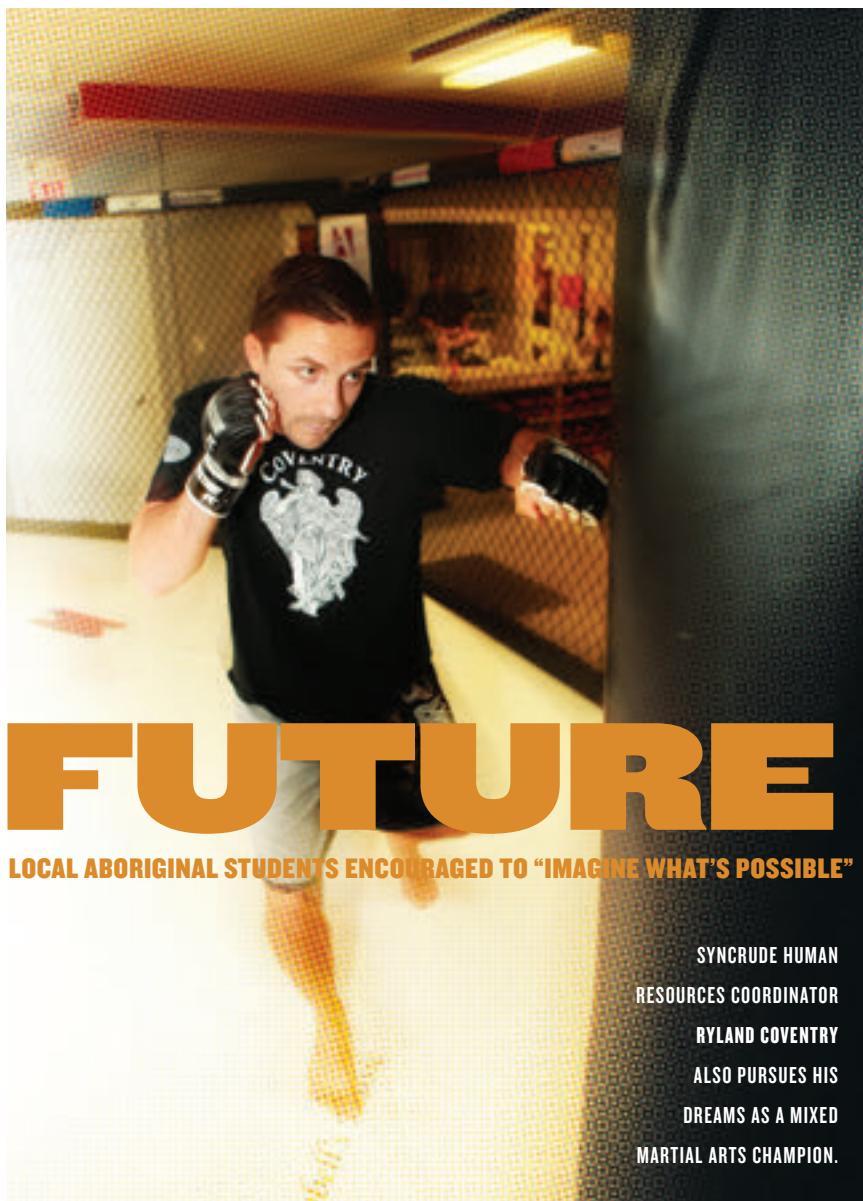
the coming years. As well, according to the Assembly of First Nations, youth who complete high school are twice as likely to be employed, while those who earn a university degree triple their earning potential.

"In today's day and age, education is more important than ever, particularly given that Aboriginal youth are projected to make up such a large part of the country's workforce," says Syncrude stakeholder relations advisor Lana Hill. "This program can help identify opportunities and truly show what can be achieved through motivation and commitment."

Set to launch in early 2016, *Imagine What's Possible* will feature a video, poster series, calendar and more. Students will hear directly from Elders, employees, business owners, community leaders and post-secondary students about their experiences with education and the opportunities it offers.

"Education is the cornerstone to a rewarding career and enhanced quality of life," says Kara Flynn, Syncrude vice president of Government & Public Affairs. "We're proud to be able to help provide greater opportunities for Aboriginal participation in our region as students set their sights on the future." <

SYNCRUDE HUMAN
RESOURCES COORDINATOR
RYLAND COVENTRY
ALSO PURSUES HIS
DREAMS AS A MIXED
MARTIAL ARTS CHAMPION.





EDUCATION TAKES TO THE ROAD

NEW COLLEGE PROGRAM BRINGS HEAVY EQUIPMENT TRAINING TO OUTLYING COMMUNITIES

CHARLES NOKOHOO,
WITH THE ATHABASCA
TRIBAL COUNCIL, TRIES HIS HAND
AT OPERATING A DOZER IN THE
MOBILE SIMULATOR UNIT.

Skills training in the region took a huge leap forward this summer when Keyano College and Western Economic Diversification announced a \$1.5-million investment towards the college's Mobile Heavy Equipment Operator (HEO) program.

The funding will help purchase four mobile simulators and equipment for Keyano instructors to deliver hands-on training in Aboriginal communities.

"We're bringing the program to them, and in the process we're developing marketable skills for community members, and creating a talent pool of skilled heavy equipment operators that industry can access," says Peter Lawlor, dean of Heavy Equipment and Trades Programs at Keyano College.

The program is the result of ongoing discussions between the Athabasca Tribal Council (ATC), Keyano College and Alberta Human Services. ATC has long recognized that having members leave their communities for extended periods of time is a barrier to education and employment.

"Heavy equipment training was most in demand when we surveyed our

members, so we worked with our partners to bring the classes to us," says Kara Dube, former director of Employment and Training for ATC. "We hope that it will help build capacity within our communities, and in the long-term provide more options and opportunities for members."

Training will be offered through a combination of online and in-class sessions providing theory, hands-on training through simulators, and work in the field. Students will learn to drive wheel loaders, articulated trucks, motor graders, large-tracked dozers, off-highway trucks and hydraulic excavators. The program is self-contained in a trailer with its own generator and can be transported to any community by truck or barge. It is expected up to 150 people will be trained using the mobile simulators over the next four years.

Syncrude provided funding towards the mobile HEO program as part of a previously announced \$2.5-million donation earmarked for Aboriginal education and arts at Keyano College. ←

ENVIRONMENTAL UPDATE

SANDHILL FEN RECEIVES MAJOR AWARD

Syncrude's Sandhill Fen is greening up in more ways than one.

The Alberta Emerald Foundation honoured the watershed research project with the Award for Large Business at the 2015 Emerald Awards, which recognize outstanding environmental initiatives in Alberta.

The 17-hectare project is located in Syncrude's former East mine. Scientists introduced a variety of wetland plants as well as more than 100,000 trees and shrubs on surrounding uplands. Many other species of trees, willows and shrubs, as well as rat root, are also growing from the seed bank in the soil that was salvaged and used in the project.

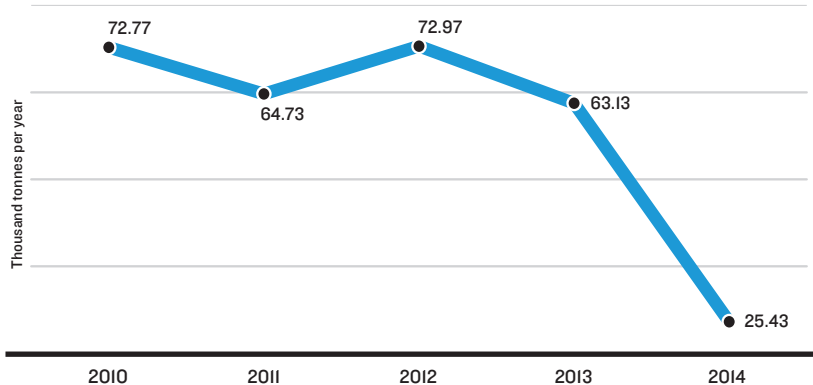
"It has been both astonishing and personally rewarding to see a former 40-metre deep open pit converted into a fen-like wetland supporting the early stages of a fully functioning biological community," states professor Dr. Jan Ciborowski, of the University of Windsor, Department of Biological Sciences.

University of Alberta Professor Dr. Lee Foote, another collaborator, agrees. "The Sandhill Fen's construction, management and research contributions represent a quantitative leap in enlightened ecological stewardship at a large scale.

The project was previously recognized in 2014 by the Mining Association of Canada with its inaugural Towards Sustainable Mining Award for Environmental Excellence. <



**SULPHUR DIOXIDE
EMISSIONS
THE LOWEST
IN SYNCRUDE'S
OPERATING
HISTORY**



Major investments by Syncrude in emissions reduction technology have led to a substantial reduction in air emissions stemming from our operation.

Sulphur dioxide emissions in 2014 were at the lowest level in our operating history. The decrease is attributable to scrubbing technology installed on all three of Syncrude's fluid cokers. <

CANDID

Is Syncrude's reclaimed land providing a home for wildlife?

The cameras say 'yes'. So does trapper and hunter Bill Abercrombie, who walks the land on foot with his team to record the tracks of passing animals.

Abercrombie's expert eye, combined with motion-detection cameras situated on Syncrude's reclaimed and undisturbed land, allow researchers to assess winter wildlife movements and set a scientific baseline for wildlife populations.

Here are some images captured by the cameras.



CAMERA

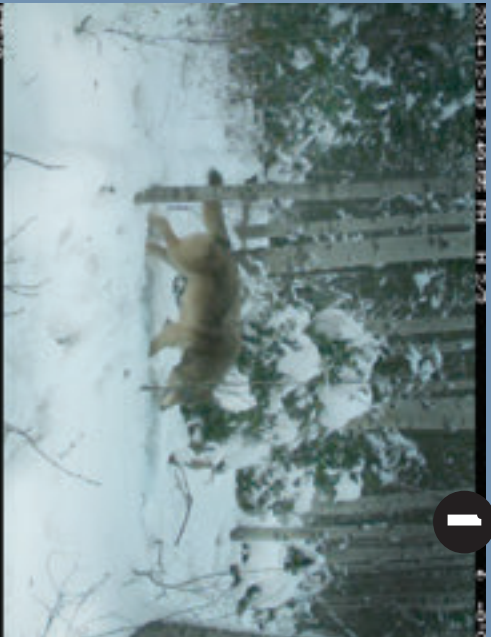
1 The Beaver Creek Natural Area observed three wolves individually in December 2014.

The wolves appear to be two adult males and one adult female, each seen alone and at different times.

2 A lynx in the Beaver Creek Natural area in February 2015. This is the same location where several wolves have been recorded, along with moose and white-tailed deer.

3 This adult female moose was spotted in February 2015 in a reclamation area, as were two other male and female moose.

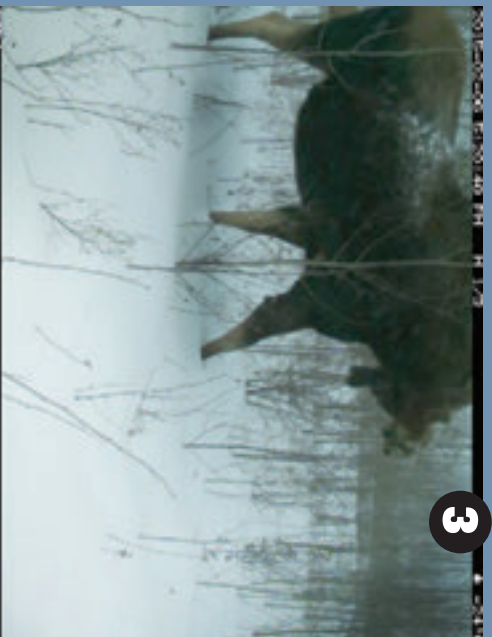
4 A number of female white-tailed deer were spotted in a reclaimed area throughout January 2015. ←



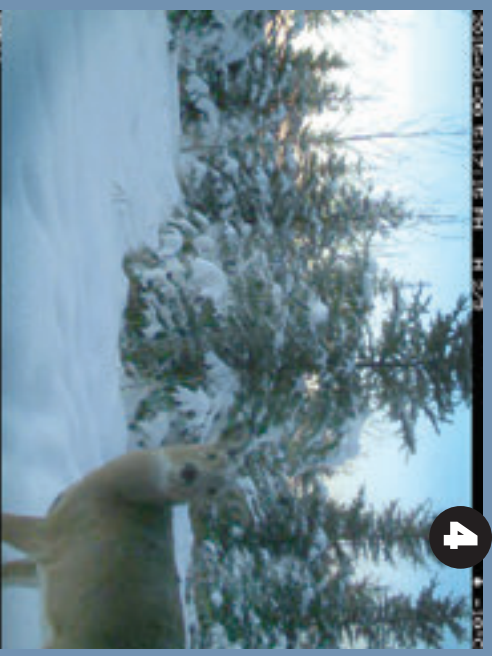
1



2



3



4



ABORIGINAL RELATIONS SCORECARD

SYNCRUDE DIRECT WORKFORCE

Total Aboriginal Employees (#)

2014

451

2010	2011	2012	2013
484	492	474	452

ABORIGINAL REPRESENTATION IN:

Permanent Syncrude workforce (%)

2014

8.9

2010	2011	2012	2013
8.4	8.6	9.1	8.7

Leaders and management (%)

2014

5.8

2010	2011	2012	2013
5.8	5.5	6.0	6.2

Administrative, Professional, Technical (%)

2014

6.2

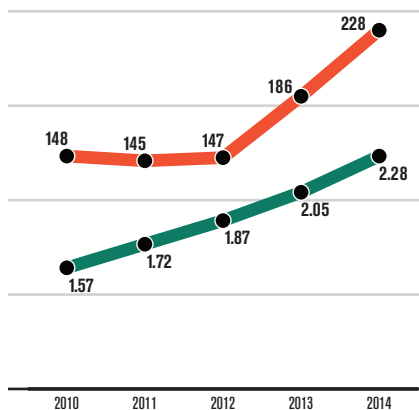
2010	2011	2012	2013
5.4	5.5	5.9	6.0

Syncrude hired 16 Aboriginal people in 2014. This represents over 11 per cent of our overall hiring.

Business

Contracts with Aboriginal Companies

— \$ millions annually
— \$ billions cumulative

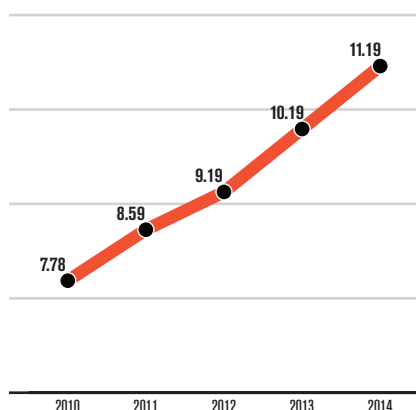


Total Aboriginal business spending for 2014 was a record \$228 million – an increase of 55 per cent over 2012. The cumulative total for Syncrude business with First Nations- and Métis-owned companies is over \$2 billion.

Community

Investing in Aboriginal Communities

\$ millions, cumulative since 2001

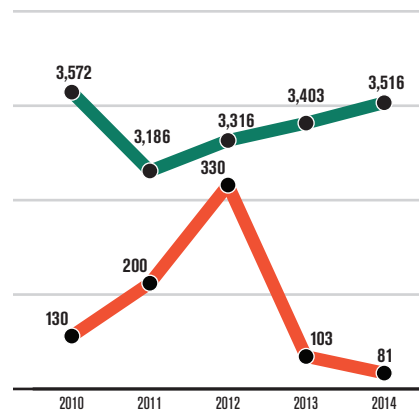


Syncrude invested over \$1 million in Aboriginal initiatives and projects during 2014.

Environment

Permanent Land Reclaimed

— hectares per year
— hectares cumulative



Syncrude has permanently reclaimed over 3,500 hectares to date. Another 1,000 hectares are ready for revegetation.

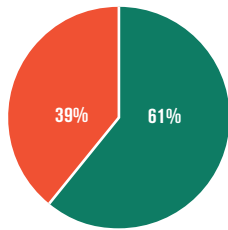
Note: Permanent land reclamation numbers decreased in 2011 due to changes in the Government of Alberta's definition of permanent reclamation. This reporting change has reclassified some land to either temporary reclamation, such as the bison pasture, or land with soils placed and available for revegetation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



Oil Sands Reclamation

Permanent and Certified

■ Syncrude
■ all other oil sands mining

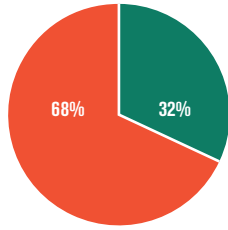


Data Source: Government of Alberta Regional Reclamation and Disturbance Tracking by Company, to December 31, 2014

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, 2014

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Trades and Operators (%)

2014

11.1

2010	2011	2012	2013
10.5	11.2	11.7	10.6

New Hires (% of all hires)

2014

11.6

2010	2011	2012	2013
10.4	15.4	9.8	6.3

Attrition Rate (%)

2014

6.0

2010	2011	2012	2013
10.2	5.6	10.4	8.2

Years of Service (# of years)

2014

10.7

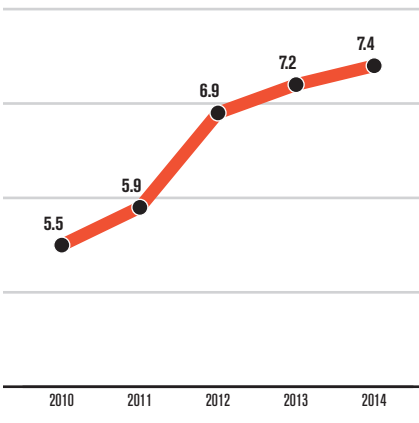
2010	2011	2012	2013
9.6	10.2	10.2	10.8

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

Environment

Trees and Shrubs Planted

millions, cumulative

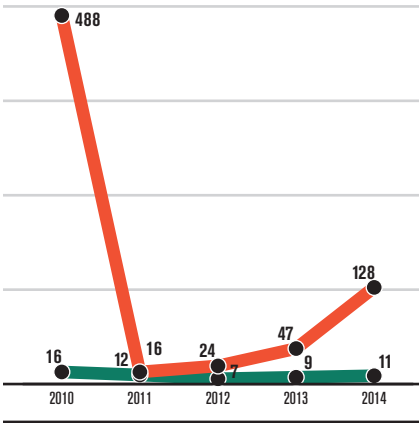


In 2014, over 157,000 tree and shrubs seedlings were planted.

Wildlife Incident Tracking

of incidents

■ avian¹
■ other animal²



¹ Includes all bird and waterfowl mortalities related to oiling. Incidents are reported to the Alberta Government Environment and Parks department. An additional 16 mortalities were reported related to vehicle collision or natural or unknown causes.

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

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 and click on Community Involvement–Scholarships and Awards. Many of the awards available are prioritized for Aboriginal and northern Alberta recipients.



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 2014 and October 2015. Congratulations and thank you for making a career with Syncrude!

5 Years of Service

Trudy Boostrom
Blaine Bradley
Alexander Brushett
Patrick Courtoreille
Perry Cullihall
Edward Dilney
Dwight Flett
Robert Glashoerster
Michael Grandjambe
Martha Kasal
Mike King
Roy Lepine
Glen Louie
Trent Mason
Steven Organ
Brandon Roberts
Kyle Sand
Melanie Serroul-Jacobs
Karyn Sullivan
Klint Taylor
Vince Vermillion
Ryan Voyageur
Melissa Winsor

10 Years of Service

Rod Bear
Jason Bourassa
Conan Boyer
Lora Cardinal
Michel Cote
Lori Cyprien
David Dewart
Dustin Doucet
Blair Drew
Raymond Dube
Daniel Genereux
Ron Groat
Darryl John
Marc Judge
Clayton Kuncio
Jamie London
Ryan Mclvor
Quentin Mercredi
Richard Pelletier
Christa Piercey

15 Years of Service

John Blanchard
Tamara Gillard
Corey Gushue
Lindsay Harpe
Bruce Lepine
Ryan Mclver
Sherisse Mills
Jimmy Noskiye
Jeff Sluchinski
Keith Tuccaro
Kyle Williams

20 Years of Service

Gloria Blanchard
Anne Boucher
Dwight Flett
Greg Gladue
Wayne Kosik
Gary Laprise
Jeffrey Massan
Gord Patterson
Anthony Punko
Janelle Scott
Joyce Walker

25 Years of Service

Rita Cyprien
Marty Quintal
Russell Brian Voyageur
Stanley Wylie

30 Years of Service

Belinda Daley
Paul Fleming
Timothy Flett
Andrew Golosky
Myles Roy

35 Years of Service

Melvin Callan
Daniel Forbister
Dennis Edward Mercer
Norma Marie Waquan



OUR ABORIGINAL RELATIONS PROGRAM



The Aboriginal Relations Steering Committee

Back Row (left to right): **Doug Webb** Aboriginal Business Liaison; **Colleen Legdon** Manager, Community Relations; **Isabelle Shelvey** Manager, Regulatory Affairs; **Donelda Patterson** Manager, Human Resources Services; **Michelle Velez** Manager, Environmental Affairs; **Peter Read** Vice President, Strategic Planning

Front Row (left to right): **Prashant Mehta** Manager, Site Services; **Dr. Tom Lawley** Chief Medical Officer; **Chaim Lum** Manager, Procurement; **Kara Flynn** Vice President, Government & Public Affairs; **Lana Hill** Advisor, Stakeholder Relations; **Greg Fuhr** Vice President, Production Mining; **Dan Brown** Manager, Process Control & Automation; **Mark Ward** President and Chief Executive Officer

Our Aboriginal Relations Team



Colleen Legdon
Community Relations
Manager



Lana Hill
Stakeholder
Relations Advisor



Jamie Sullivan
Stakeholder
Relations Advisor



Christine Simpson
Stakeholder Relations
Coordinator



Tara Abraham
Community
Investment Specialist



Doug Webb
Aboriginal Business
Liaison



Marty Quintal
Aboriginal
Recruitment Advisor

The goals of Syncrude's Aboriginal Relations program are to:

- Be recognized as a leader in Aboriginal relations and business development, and an employer of choice
- Attract and retain qualified candidates from local Aboriginal communities
- Maintain support from regional communities of Syncrude's role in the oil sands
- Ensure effective, two-way relationships and consultation
- Focus community investment on education and recruitment, community relations, cultural retention and Aboriginal leadership
- Ensure regional communities have the capacity to engage with Syncrude regarding consultation, employment, business, and environmental and socio-economic impacts
- Ensure environmental programs are well understood by our stakeholders and designed to mitigate impacts to traditional land uses, and incorporate traditional knowledge where possible
- Achieve a balance of economic, environmental and social outcomes through engagement and evaluation of impacts
- Achieve regulatory and social license to operate

Progress towards these goals is stewarded by Syncrude's Aboriginal Relations Steering Committee, which includes executives, senior managers and advisors who meet quarterly 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.

THOUGHTS FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO



CEO Mark Ward lends a hand at Syncrude's Tree Planting Day, where family and friends are invited to help reclaim former mining land.

Over the last decade, how we connect to the world has advanced in truly amazing ways. Thanks to innovations like iPhones, Twitter, Facebook and Skype, we often don't even need to interact with others face to face. But while technology has changed the way we communicate, one thing remains constant – the importance of relationships.

This year's *Pathways* explores many different perspectives on relationships. Indeed, you'll read about those between family members, between Elders and their communities, and even between our Earth and the stars.

For example, Nicole Bourque-Bouchier is well known in Wood Buffalo and recognized across Canada for her entrepreneurial spirit, determination and generosity. As she tells us in her story, Nicole finds inspiration through her relationships with family, and as a mother, wife and sister.

Joe Lafond also knows the value of connections. A Syncrude employee for more than 37 years, he's well known outside of work as a great community benefactor. His caring for horses has seen him rescue the animals from such dangers as fires, mud-filled terrain and even a pack of ferocious dogs.

Further north, we visit Fort Chipewyan's Kahkiyow Keykanow Elders Care Home. Here, we meet staff members Cookie Simpson, Shai Wylie and Sara Voyageur. Through the compassion and professionalism of these women, Elders no longer need to travel away to receive the care they need. Now, they can remain in the community and continue sharing their knowledge and wisdom with the younger generations.

And as we look up to the sky, planetary scientist Rob Cardinal gives us a perspective on the universe you won't find in textbooks. Indeed, through Rob, we learn how Aboriginal philosophy and beliefs can provide greater meaning to our relationship with the sun, moon and stars.

At Syncrude, we are guided by principles that assist us in building relationships with our neighbours, local communities and other stakeholders. For us, these include our responsibility to seek out and involve those who might be affected by our operations, respecting their viewpoints, and considering fully what we hear as we make decisions about our operations.

These relationships come to life through such aspects as employment – we are one of the largest employers of Aboriginal people in Canada – and opportunities for Aboriginal businesses that now total over \$2.2 billion. We are also proud to have been recertified this year in the top-tier of Canadian companies in the Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) program of the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB). We are one of only two oil sands operators accredited at this level.

I hope you enjoy reading this newest edition of *Pathways*. Our editorial team works hard all year to bring you interesting stories and perspectives that we hope you will share with friends, family and colleagues. If you have feedback on the articles, or have a story idea, please let us know at info@syncrude.com.

Mark Ward
President & Chief Executive Officer



“...every single thing
that you have is a gift given
to you by the Universe,
by the Creator.”

Rob Cardinal



Syncrude

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, and Suncor Energy Ventures Partnership.



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