

Pathways

ISSUE NO IX • SYNCRUDE CANADA LTD. ABORIGINAL REVIEW 2018

*Bison Ranch
Celebrates
25 Years*

02

*Return
of the
Bison*

08

*Recognizing
Robert
Cree*

12

*Supporting
Boreal
Conservation*

20

*Aboriginal
Procurement at
New Heights*

27

*Valuing
Traditional
Knowledge*

30

Welcome

There are many different pathways to success. It could be intricately beading moose hide gauntlets or sharing your life's journey on stage. It could be the successful certification towards a rewarding career. Or it could be sharing traditional knowledge with the next generation.

There is no end to the remarkable successes and accomplishments among First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in the Wood Buffalo region, Alberta and across

Canada. *Pathways* captures these stories and connects with those making positive contributions, 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.

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Kara Flynn, Lana Hill, Jo Anne Hulan, Mark Kruger, Colleen Legdon, Lisa Nelson, Tracey Stephen, Doug Webb

CONTRIBUTORS

Drew Casford, John Copley, Will Gibson, Global News Woman of Vision, Teresa Koch, Mark Kruger, Paul Manuel, Liz Nicholls, Tracey Stephen, Kevin Thornton

PHOTOGRAPHY

Art Gallery of Alberta, CBC Licensing, FIBA 3x3, Glenbow Archives, Global News Woman of Vision, Raven Gorman, Greg Halinda, Laughing Dog Photography, Crystal Mercredi, Tanya Plonka, Provincial Archives of Alberta, Roth & Ramberg, Royal Ontario Museum, Leithan Slade, Theatre Network, Kevin Thornton

DESIGN & PRODUCTION

Karo Group Calgary

ILLUSTRATION

Chris Pecora

PRINTING

BP Media, Inc.

FRONT AND BACK COVER

Jonathan Barry – Beaver Creek Wood Bison Ranch, Syncrude Mildred Lake Site

INSIDE BACK COVER

Johane Janelle – Conservation herd, Saskatchewan



BUSINESS

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



EMPLOYMENT

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



COMMUNITY

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



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.



EDUCATION

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



LEADERSHIP

Leadership is found among young and old alike. As a member of many regional and national organizations, Syncrude works with business and governments to champion the continued advancement of Indigenous 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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ISSUE NO IX • SYNCRUDE CANADA LTD. ABORIGINAL REVIEW 2018



02



06

Glenbow Archives, NA-5425 76



12



TRACKS AND FIELDS

The 25th anniversary of the Beaver Creek wood bison herd.



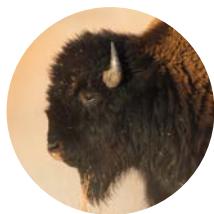
SUSTENANCE & SURVIVAL

The connection between Indigenous peoples and the bison.



HONoured BY HIS PEOPLE

Committed to the future of his community.



8 | Return of the Bison



14 | On Track



16 | Bright Horizons



18 | A Real Stand-up Guy



20 | To Preserve and Protect



22 | Home Away from Home



24 | Keeping Tradition on the Table



28 | Into the Woods



30 | Old Land New Beginnings



32 | Walking Towards Awareness

A Lift for Young Apprentices [page 26](#) Possibility and Partnerships [page 27](#) Change for the Better [page 33](#) Leading by Example [page 34](#)
Boys with Braids [page 36](#) Heritage Tracks [page 38](#) A Journey Comes Full Circle [page 39](#) Back to her Roots [page 40](#)
A Proud Future [page 42](#) Environment Update [page 44](#) Employee Milestones [page 47](#)
Aboriginal Relations Scorecard [page 48](#) Aboriginal Relations Team [page 50](#) Thoughts from the Managing Director [page 52](#)

“

The herd demonstrates our commitment to return the land we disturb to a part of the boreal landscape capable of sustaining the largest land mammals in North America...



...and just as important, the bison represent our commitment to working with Aboriginal communities in this region.

”

Tracks *AND* Fields

It was a blustery winter day on February 16th, 1993, when six wood bison cows and 24 calves were offloaded from trucks onto snow-covered reclaimed land at Syncrude's Mildred Lake mine site. The small herd had come from Elk Island National Park and was blessed in a ceremony by Elders from the Fort McKay First Nation.

Twenty-five years later, the Beaver Creek Wood Bison Ranch is now home to around 300 wood bison prized for their health and genetic purity.

"The herd demonstrates our commitment to return the land we disturb to a part of the boreal landscape capable of sustaining the largest land mammals in North America," says Greg Fuhr, Syncrude's vice president of mining and extraction. "And just as important, the bison represent our commitment to working with Aboriginal communities in this region."

The idea for a ranch, co-managed between Syncrude and the Fort McKay First Nation, stemmed from the need to research how reclaimed land would stand up to large mammals. Former Syncrude president Jim Carter said the company initially looked at using beef cattle for that job.

"Originally, we toyed with the idea of raising cattle on the reclaimed land," says Jim, who was Syncrude's vice president of



**A partnership between
Syncrude and the
Fort McKay First Nation
contributing
to species and
cultural preservation.**

operations when the ranch started up. "When we approached the Fort McKay First Nation, they told us they would love to see bison return to the region. And the idea made so much sense. The wood bison were here 200 years ago – this area was part of their natural range that stretches down to Lac La Biche. And Wood Buffalo National Park had an anthrax outbreak at that time so our herd had the potential to be used as stock to help replenish the herds up there."

Syncrude had the right man to help manage the herd, too. "Torchy Peden was working in mine maintenance for us at the time but he was a real natural. Torchy was ranching already with a small

herd of Hereford cattle at his place near the Clearwater River so he was already skilled with animal husbandry," Jim says. "Prior to joining Syncrude, Torchy had run a gas station in Fort McKay so he had a lot of relationships in the community and that was important. We wanted people from Fort McKay involved in the ranch. Chief Jim Boucher was a big proponent of the ranch and we saw the ranch as an opportunity to partner with our closest neighbour."

Over the next 25 years, members of the Fort McKay First Nation have worked at the ranch, including relatives of Chief Boucher. The wood bison is an important part of the First Nation's culture and is ingrained in their spirituality. The Nation harvests two bison each year and shares the meat among community members. The harvest is also an opportunity to pass down traditional knowledge to youth.

"Our people have a longstanding relationship with the bison, which is why one of our most important spiritual lakes is called Buffalo Lake," says Chief Boucher. "Our people have eaten meat from bison in that herd – we have an affinity for it because it is a good, lean, healthy meat. Many of our people, including my brother Ricky Boucher and Harvey Roland, have worked in the operations and management of the ranch. We see it as a significant entity for the future."

Photo Left: A newborn calf is assisted to its feet by members of the herd. It takes its first steps as the latest addition to the 25-year-old Beaver Creek wood bison herd, which has grown from 30 to around 300 animals.

The ranch has received numerous livestock awards over its 25 years, with the herd recognized for its genetic purity and contributions to species preservation. It has also proven reclaimed land can accommodate animals commonly weighing between 500 to 900 kilograms, or 1,200 to 2,000 pounds.

A bison's weight is matched only by its appetite. Ranch manager Brad Ramstead remembers the time the herd gained access to an experimental planting of pine trees which turned out to be a delicacy to the animals. "The bison finished off 75 trees in short order," laughs Brad, adding future planting was fenced off until the trees were big enough to withstand any nudge.

Earlier this year, the ranch relocated 59 cows and six bulls to a new 150-hectare parcel of reclaimed habitat that includes a mature forest. The addition of trees to the habitat at the Beaver Creek Ranch offers new opportunities to monitor the health and productivity of reclaimed land while contributing to the ongoing recovery of a species once very close to extinction.

"The bison are really finding the spruce trees interesting," says Brad. "They are rubbing against them and laying under them. It's new to them so it will be really neat to see how they adapt."

Photos Top to Bottom:

A rare pair of twins was born into the herd in 2010.

Members of the Fort McKay First Nation work at the ranch tending to the herd.

In 2018, 65 bison were relocated to a 150-hectare parcel of reclaimed land.

A bison is innoculated and tagged for identification.



GRAND CHAMPIONS

The Beaver Creek Wood Bison Ranch was recognized earlier this year with the Alberta Emerald Foundation's 2018 Emerald Award for Large Business.

In describing the project, the Foundation noted, "When a large corporation in Alberta's oil sands teams with a neighbouring First Nations community to repurpose reclaimed land, it's a good thing. But when a threatened species of wood buffalo flourish, creating a genetically pure line of animal that is culturally significant to this and future generations of the First Nations people of Fort McKay, it's a great thing." Alberta's Lieutenant Governor, Lois Mitchell, presented the award to a team of employees from Syncrude and the Fort McKay Group of Companies.



Many of our people, including my brother Ricky Boucher and Harvey Roland, have worked in the operations and management of the ranch. We see it as a significant entity for the future."

Chief Jim Boucher



In 1993, Torchy Peden helped set up and oversee the Beaver Creek Wood Bison Ranch.



In 2018, 59 cows and six bulls were introduced to a 150-hectare parcel of forested reclaimed land.



The bison at the Beaver Creek Ranch have contributed to species conservation due to their health and genetic purity.



SUSTENANCE & SURVIVAL


Bison once numbered in the tens of millions across North America until their near extinction in the mid-1800s. The mighty animals served as the lifeblood of the continent's Indigenous peoples, with man and beast vitally linked.

"We often hear Indigenous people today refer to the bison or buffalo as being our education. It's a term used because of the tendency for bison to roam, to move forward from one place to another. Education is always about moving forward and learning new things," says Francis Whiskeyjack, a Cree Elder with the Amiskwaciy Academy in Edmonton.

Tribes would follow the bison during the warm weather and harvest enough to survive through the winter months. "The bison no longer sustain our people and instead have been replaced by other four-legged creatures, including the moose, deer, elk, caribou and even the bear," he says. "Until horse culture became known throughout the continent,

Indigenous hunters needed a way to kill enough bison to sustain themselves so they developed what we call 'buffalo-jumps' where animals would be chased over a cliff so the meat and hides could be harvested more efficiently."

Modern technology replaced the need to make tools, utensils, clothing and shelter, but Francis notes that wasn't always the case. "The bison was once the main source of nutrition for Indigenous peoples, who used every part of the animal. It was their economy and provided the necessities of life, including food, weapons, clothing, shelter and so much more."

The most sacred part is the skull. "The skull of the bison is the symbol of the sacredness of life and thus is still used in ceremony as a natural altar," says Francis. "The pipe of peace is placed atop the skull and the pipe carrier, usually an Elder, sits on a buffalo robe when he lifts the pipe to the four directions, to the Creator and to Mother Earth." 

A BOUNTIFUL BEAST

The history and culture of Canada's Indigenous peoples is intrinsically tied to the bison. Despite the bison being the largest land animal in the western hemisphere — weighing up to 900 kilograms (2,000 pounds) — nothing went to waste. Elder Francis Whiskeyjack lists the diverse uses of this majestic and bountiful beast.



MEAT

Dried and mixed with berries to make pemmican



HIDE

Tipi coverings, clothing, bedding, rugs



HORNS

Head-dress decorations, cups, dishes



TAIL

Knife sheaths, fly swatters, riding crops, tipi tassels



5



6



7



8



9



10



11



12



13

These archival photos were selected from archives and collections across Canada.

1. Skinning buffalo.

Provincial Archives of Alberta, A5595

2. Bonnet case, buffalo rawhide, paint, c. 1870.

Royal Ontario Museum © ROM, 915X36.B

3. Blood tipis, Fort Macleod, Alberta.

Glenbow Archives, NB-40-887

4. Turtle, Peigan, Winold Reiss Art School.

Glenbow Archives, NA-5425-76

5. Moodie family memorabilia displayed in their home, Battleford, Saskatchewan.

Glenbow Archives, PA-4054-152

6. Pair of Moccasins, hide, beads, wool cloth, ochre, c. 1904.

Royal Ontario Museum © ROM, 913.14.385.B

7. Medicine men at Sun-dance.

Provincial Archives of Alberta, P121

8. Skunk, Blackfoot (Siksika) reserve, Alberta.

Glenbow Archives, PA-3385-240

9. Indigenous woman smoking meat.

Provincial Archives of Alberta, P40

10. Martin Breaker in a buffalo robe, Blackfoot (Siksika) reserve, Alberta.

Glenbow Archives, PA-3385-239

11. Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump.

Shutterstock

12. Dispatch-type bag, beaded hide, c. 1907.

Royal Ontario Museum © ROM, 913.14.62

13. Drying buffalo meat, Stoney.

Glenbow Archives, NA-7-150



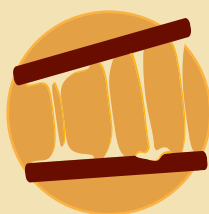
BONES

Knives, axes, splints, tools, sled runners



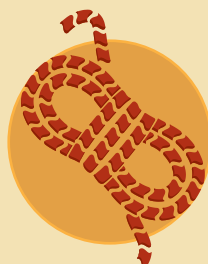
INTESTINES & BLADDER

Food containers, paint



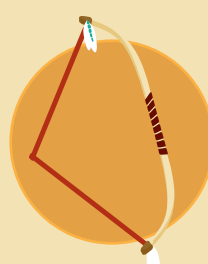
HOOF

Cartilage
Glue, drinking cups



HAIR

Ropes, pillow stuffing



SINEW

Bowstrings



DROPPINGS

Fuel for fire

RETURN OF THE BISON

THE NEAR DEMISE OF BISON IN CANADA AND THE AMAZING EFFORTS TO RECOVER THE VITAL SPECIES

Bison have played a central role in the history and culture of many Indigenous peoples across North America — but not long ago they were nearly extinct.

Before the European colonization of North America, the bison population, made up of plains and wood bison subspecies, was about 30 million. “They were the most dominant species in North America and had huge effects on all the other species that lived here,” says Wes Olson, Canada’s leading expert in bison and bison habitats. “When they were extirpated in the 1800s, all those relationships changed.”

Due to heavy hunting for food and provisions for fur traders, bison herds were devastated. By the early 1900s, less than 25 wild bison remained on the continent while approximately 900 others lived on farms and ranches.

Places that were once filled with bison grazing pastures, like Banff, Alberta, soon had none. The extinction of bison in these areas left a major hole in the ecosystem and communities that relied on the animal for survival.

“Virtually everything that lives on the landscape with bison benefits from them. The linkages between bison and other species run very deep,” explains Wes.

Bone yard, Michigan Carbon Works, Detroit, Michigan.



Glenbow Archives, NA-2242-2



Provincial Archives of Alberta, A4724

Bison in Fort McMurray awaiting transport to Wood Buffalo National Park, 1925.

The complete loss of this important species was narrowly prevented by the efforts of a few ranchers and conservationists in North America. The remaining herds were shipped to national parks and private farms. The Canadian government acquired the Pablo-Allard plains bison herd of Montana in the early 1900s, and brought them to Alberta’s Elk Island National Park east of Edmonton and Buffalo National Park near Wainwright.



“ Virtually everything that lives on the landscape with bison benefits from them. The linkages between bison and other species run very deep. ”

Fifteen years later, Buffalo National Park reached capacity and shipped many bison north to Wood Buffalo National Park, which was already home to wild wood bison. The two hybridized within a few years. “The introduction of plains bison also brought with them cattle diseases like bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis that is still prevalent in the park today,” says Wes.

By the mid 1950s, wood bison were presumed extinct, until a disease free herd of 200 was discovered in the park. Twenty three of these bison were brought to Elk Island National Park. Three hundred remain there today as the most genetically pure wood bison in the world.

During the early years of bison conservation, the goal was preservation. Today, Wes explains, bison conservation is as much about protecting the animal as it is restoring the Great Plains, one of the most endangered ecosystems in North America.

This is because, Wes continues, bison is one of the most influential keystone species that ever occupied the continent. Bison help to create favourable ecological conditions for all of the species that live there and their existence is important for ecosystem health and diversity.

“They are the only mammal in North America that deposits a dung patty on the landscape, as opposed to small pellets,” he says. “Each dropping supports over 1,000 insects and, in many cases, up to 100 species. If you think of the amount of insectivores that require insects to survive, that is a huge biomass produced by each animal.”

One bison can produce a quarter of its body mass in insects just from its dung every year — feeding a whole host of species including the cow bird, pictured here.



“Where we have bison, we are now seeing an increase of other species that are endangered,” says Wes. And it’s not just the creation of insects that benefit other species. Bison shed their hair in the spring and many birds will line their nests with it for safety. Where there are bison, there is a 60 per cent increase in chick survival because of the way their hair hides the scent of eggs from predators and provides thermal warmth.

Bison herd in Wood Buffalo National Park.



In 2015, Wes launched an insect biodiversity investigation at the Syncrude Fort McKay First Nation Beaver Creek Ranch to learn more about the insects occupying reclaimed areas both with and without bison. The results were remarkable. “We found almost 100 fold increase in insects just because the bison were there,” says Wes. “There are some pretty profound linkages between the species.”

Wes first became interested in bison around 1969 when a friend found a skull in the mountains. It wasn't until 1981 when he started a job with Parks Canada, as a national park warden in Banff, that his interest turned into his passion. By 1990, Wes was working as a park warden in Elk Island National Park, where he specialized in bison research and helped manage the park's bison population.

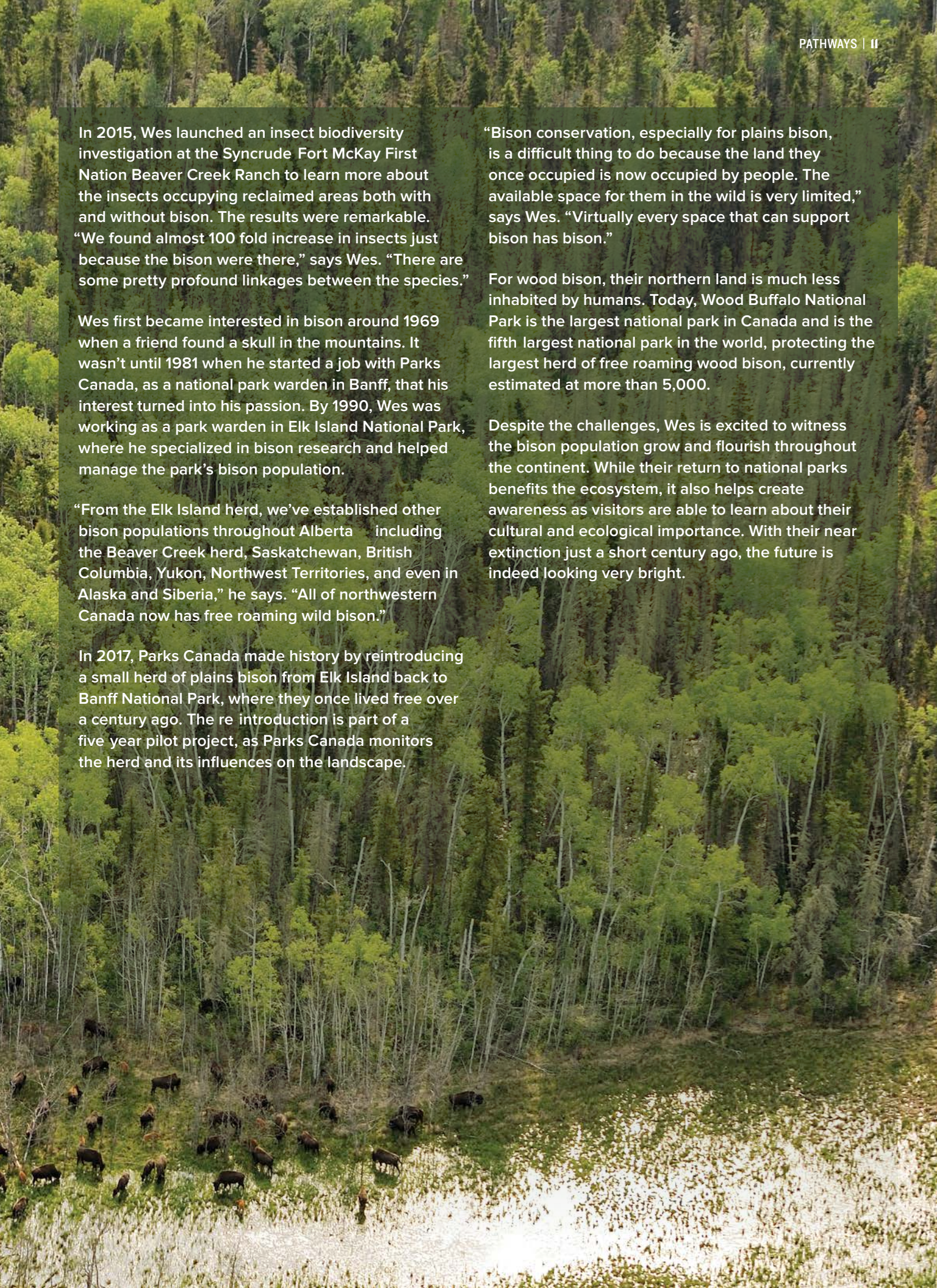
“From the Elk Island herd, we've established other bison populations throughout Alberta including the Beaver Creek herd, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Yukon, Northwest Territories, and even in Alaska and Siberia,” he says. “All of northwestern Canada now has free roaming wild bison.”

In 2017, Parks Canada made history by reintroducing a small herd of plains bison from Elk Island back to Banff National Park, where they once lived free over a century ago. The re introduction is part of a five year pilot project, as Parks Canada monitors the herd and its influences on the landscape.

“Bison conservation, especially for plains bison, is a difficult thing to do because the land they once occupied is now occupied by people. The available space for them in the wild is very limited,” says Wes. “Virtually every space that can support bison has bison.”

For wood bison, their northern land is much less inhabited by humans. Today, Wood Buffalo National Park is the largest national park in Canada and is the fifth largest national park in the world, protecting the largest herd of free roaming wood bison, currently estimated at more than 5,000.

Despite the challenges, Wes is excited to witness the bison population grow and flourish throughout the continent. While their return to national parks benefits the ecosystem, it also helps create awareness as visitors are able to learn about their cultural and ecological importance. With their near extinction just a short century ago, the future is indeed looking very bright.





ROBERT CREE

Honoured by his people

Robert Cree remembers the time they came to fetch his family. It was five o'clock in the morning, in September 1963, when he, his three sisters and younger brother were loaded onto a bus outside their home in Lac La Biche.

His siblings ranged in age from six to 13. As they left that day, not knowing what was happening, where they were going, or even why, they waved goodbye to their parents. They wouldn't see them again for two years.

Their destination was a residential school in Hobbema. "When we got there, we were separated, girls on one side, boys on the other. We weren't allowed to see

our sisters or talk to them," recalls Robert. "Maybe once a month, through the serving hatch where they gave us

food, we might pass at the same time and I would see them."

Robert refused to allow the anguish of his experiences to restrain his ambitions and went on to great achievements — Councillor and Chief with the Fort McMurray #468 First Nation, successful entrepreneur and businessman, and now a health counsellor. He is also a man of deep faith and strong beliefs.

He nearly followed in the footsteps of friends and family who were unable to heal from the trauma of the Sixties Scoop, but was rescued by an Elder in the community who helped him overcome his demons. Now he is trying to do the same for others.

To Robert, it's not about giving back, it's about giving.

Robert has the life experience of having walked many difficult paths. He left the residential school system after six years and came to live with family in Fort McMurray. There were however no educational options for him locally, and it was difficult for Aboriginal youth to get to the high schools in the larger communities. Robert wanted to finish his education and moved to Edmonton where schools were more accessible.

He remembers having to fight to get his train ticket from the Department of Indian Affairs when leaving Fort McMurray. It was a fight he won, but it frustrated him. "I believed in myself, and I had faith," he says. "Sometimes it was all I had."

Despite his childhood experiences, Robert is an enthusiastic advocate of learning and was an early proponent of employment training. He also became politically involved as a way of improving conditions in the community. When asked to run for Council, he did so, and was later elected Chief, a position he held from 1981 to 1991.

In many ways, Robert was in the right place at the right time. In the early 1980s, companies like Syncrude were working with local Aboriginal businesses so, with that in mind, Robert helped to start the first Aboriginal business alliance — the Athabasca Native Development Council. In 1987, he helped co-found Christina River Enterprises, the successful business arm of the Fort McMurray #468 First Nation. Still an important part of the community today, it was also one of the first members of the Northeastern Alberta Aboriginal Business Association (NAABA), which recently celebrated 25 years.

***"I believed in myself,
and I had faith
... sometimes it
was all I had."***



Robert Cree received the RARA Adult Leadership of the Year Award in 2018.

“We knew back then we had to work together,” says Robert. “NAABA was one of the ways to do that.”

Robert is recognized in the community for his work to preserve traditional knowledge, specifically arranging youth culture camps. He is committed to preserving the teachings of the tipi, as well as fishing, trapping, survival skills, animal calls, outside cooking and drumming. In addition, he encourages the importance of spirituality through smudging, prayer and the use of the sweat lodge. “Heritage is important,” he says. “Our people need to keep our traditions as part of our identity.”

His current role as a health counsellor on the First Nation may be his most important leadership role yet, as he helps people get their lives back on track. In much the same way he was helped when he was younger, Robert

tries to be there for his community.

“I believe in talking and, more importantly, in listening. I was helped because somebody listened to me and believed in me. I try to do the same.”

Robert’s guidance and counsel have been valued by the community over the years and in 2018 he received the Adult Leadership of the Year Award, sponsored by Syncrude, at the Regional Aboriginal Recognition Awards (RARA) celebration.

“Our people need to keep our traditions as part of our identity.”

“The RARA awards are important to the community,” he says. Robert has received many awards and much recognition over a lifetime of service, but this one was special. “I was one of the people who helped start RARA back in the eighties. Being recognized by them is an honour.”

Some students leave high school uncertain about their future, but one recent graduate believes post-secondary will help her champion greater inclusion of Indigenous perspectives into business and industry.

Maria Golosky is on her way toward earning an engineering degree at the University of Alberta. Throughout her life, the principles and beliefs of Métis culture have provided inspiration and been guiding lights. "My community has taught me the value of wisdom, peace, honesty and empathy," she says. "Treating our earth with the utmost respect is a value I take very seriously and I

hope as an engineer I can contribute in a positive way."

A graduate of Holy Trinity Catholic High School in Fort McMurray, Maria has always taken pride in her roots. While working with the Métis Local during the summer of 2018, the connection to her culture and traditions grew stronger than ever. "I have been fortunate to learn about my heritage through sharing circles and reconciliation events. By continuing my education, I hope I can help guide other Métis kids towards university and a brighter future."

Helping hands were never far from Maria who received a scholarship through the Belcourt Brosseau

Métis Awards (BBMAs) program in 2018. The BBMAs help students realize their potential by supporting post-secondary education and skills development. More than \$7.2 million and 1,800 awards have been provided to youth across Alberta since the program was established in 2001.

Awards are supported by donations from Syncrude and other organizations for the BBMA endowment fund, which was established by the late Dr. Herb Belcourt, his cousin Orval Belcourt and Georges Brosseau, Q.C.

"Maria's excitement, desire and passion really stood out to the awards panel," says Theresa Majeran, communications and marketing consultant

with the BBMAs.

"She demonstrated a meaningful connection to her Métis culture. That's a big part of what we want to encourage and foster through our awards program."

Maria hopes her journey can inspire others to make their own dreams a reality. "Consider different perspectives and listen to the advice of others. But remember, at the end of the day, your own happiness should be your priority."


Maria admits life is full of challenges, but they can be overcome when you stay true to yourself. "I am very motivated to prove myself and push myself to learn as much as I possibly can."



On Track



“Treating our earth with the utmost respect is a value I take very seriously and I hope as an engineer I can contribute in a positive way.”



“Throughout my studies,
and as a personal interest,
I’ve been able to learn more
about First Nations, Métis,
and Inuit culture and
where I come from.”

BRIGHT HORIZONS



rowing up in Coalhurst, a small town in southern Alberta, Shaye Anne Pierson was heavily involved with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints from an early age. Despite the supportive community inside her church, at school, things were different. She was different.

“I frequently had to explain why I wouldn’t swear, why I wore clothing that covered my knees and shoulders, or why I didn’t drink coffee and didn’t play on Sundays,” says Shaye. “But I was never too bothered because of my support system, and it’s taught me how to be confident in my difference.”

This confidence allowed Shaye to stand out and stand up – and she wanted to teach others how they could do the same. In high school, she pursued as many leadership opportunities as she could, from student council and yearbook committee to health and wellness programs. She ran a successful childcare service and tutored kids in math, science and reading. She also led and presented at nine student leadership conferences across Alberta.

Although Shaye was raised outside the traditions of her Métis heritage, it has deeply influenced who she is today. She explains how Indigenous teachings allow her to be careful and thoughtful when making decisions, especially those that affect others.

“Throughout my studies, and as a personal interest, I’ve been able to learn more about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit culture and where I come from,” she says. “There are many aspects that I bring to my own life, like the concept of ‘Seven Generations,’ where decisions are made collectively and with the consideration of many generations to come.”

Shaye was recently named a 2018 STEAM Horizon Award winner, presented by the Ingenium Foundation, for her positive impact on the community and her commitment as a positive leader for youth. The Foundation began its work in 2007 to share the human stories of Canadian innovation, and to inspire the next generation of great innovators. The awards program, supported in part by Syncrude, presents five students annually with a \$25,000 prize for their post secondary education in the fields of science, technology, engineering, arts and math.

This fall, Shaye headed to the University of Lethbridge where she is studying a dual degree in science and education. Her love for helping and inspiring others is something she hopes to continue as a future teacher.

“Every person is capable of being a leader on a daily basis no matter what age, race or gender,” says Shaye. “Introverts and extroverts alike can be leaders just by doing all they can to serve people around them.” ■

A REAL STAND-UP GUY



"AT THE END, I'M SHELDON TODAY."

This is a coming-of-age story about a storyteller who found a new way to use his artistry to explore the question, 'What does it take to change a life?'

It started 17 years ago in Edmonton, where the buzz at Nextfest, a Syncrude-sponsored showcase of emerging artists, was all about Sheldon Elter, a charismatic 22-year-old Métis from Peace River who'd created a remarkable one-man show from the raw materials of his life.

Métis Mutt was about a hard-knock past, full of domestic chaos, racist bullying, drug and alcohol abuse, and confusion on a heartbreaking level. And it was framed as a stand-up comedy routine.

It was also a hit, and so was Sheldon.

Métis Mutt toured across Canada for more than 15 years, performing in schools and community halls, as well as abroad.

During that time, Sheldon opened for hypnotist Marc Savard for a grueling 220 shows in eight months. His dad had died in a car accident en route for a visit during that tour. "I didn't understand the guilt I was feeling. I was back on the road a week later," says Sheldon.

Theatre beckoned, but a term at Grant MacEwan College was a disaster. "I did crazy amounts of Ecstasy, anti-depressants," he says. "I lost 50 pounds in four months. I thought I might kill myself."

took on darker hues. "When I think about my jokes now, there's so much shame attached to the fact I might have been perpetuating negative stereotypes," he says, wincing at the thought. "I had a chip on my shoulder. But I knew in my heart what I was doing wasn't quite right. I was worried about it."

When he was approached for another run of Métis Mutt last year, Sheldon knew his show had to change. And, as Theatre Network audiences in Edmonton discovered, it did. The show, again sponsored by Syncrude, went on to win multiple awards, including 2018 Sterling Awards for both outstanding production and performance by a leading actor.

Director Ron Jenkins first saw the show at Nextfest in 2002 and "was blown away by Sheldon's courage, his brutal honesty, the way he turns comedy on a dime."

But a lot has changed since then. "Sheldon has spent a lot of time re-discovering where he's come from, what he's learned, his Indigenous heritage and what that means for a creative person," Ron says.

Sheldon, now 39, has a lifetime of experiences to understand. "There are many people named Sheldon in the play," he says. "At the end, I'm Sheldon today."

Those experiences are resonating with audiences at every level. The play's impact astounds Theatre Network artistic director Bradley Moss. "We never had so much interest in school matinées. It was mind-blowing for me how many kids at Sheldon's post-show talkbacks came up and made disclosures about drugs or family violence," Bradley says.

"The beauty of Sheldon in those moments, his energy, his love, his ability to get kids to talk, how he took care of them, put them in a safe blanket and empowered them as they opened up. I've never seen anything like it." 🧡

**IF YOU HAVE
THE POWER TO
CHANGE YOUR MIND,
YOU HAVE THE
POWER TO CHANGE
YOUR WORLD."**



Métis Mutt was a show you didn't forget. It was a riveting barrage of fragments — comedy, memories, songs, asides — that conjured a life of constant relocation in northern Alberta. A small boy with his mom and his little brother running from an abusive father in a series of towns, houses and occasional women's shelters.

The show was peppered with unsettling off-side jokes that Sheldon's younger self — stand-up comic by night, Grand Prairie Community College student teacher by day — had taken to bars and comedy clubs. Nervous laughter followed by cringing — that's how Sheldon's satire affected the audience.

He dropped out before he flunked out. Sheldon credits Marc with saving his life by taking him back on the road to "figure out who I was spiritually."

Armed with Marc's simple counsel — "if you have the power to change your mind, you have the power to change your world" — he returned to school and finished what he'd started. "I was the only one in my class who knew more about Chet Atkins and Hank Williams than Rodgers and Hammerstein," Sheldon laughs.

As his perspectives changed, what at the age of 19 had seemed like the reward of laughter from an audience

To Preserve

Five partners. Five parks. One major impact. A unique collaboration between governments, First Nations and industry has created the largest protected area of boreal forest on the entire planet.

It's the first of its kind in the world — a unique, made-in-Canada approach to land protection and industrial development. Syncrude, along with the governments of Alberta and Canada, the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Tallcree First Nation, announced a groundbreaking partnership this year which resulted in the creation of the Birch River Wildland Provincial Park.

This new 3,300 square kilometre park connects Birch Mountains Wildland Provincial Park to Wood Buffalo National Park, Kazan Wildland Provincial Park and Richardson Wildland Provincial Park. Together, they form a conservation area of over 6.7 million hectares, or 67,000 square kilometres, more than twice the size of Vancouver Island and slightly bigger than the Great Bear Rainforest.



Adjacent to the southern border of Wood Buffalo National Park, the Birch River Wildland Provincial Park forms part of a combined conservation area of more than 6.7 million hectares.

The partnership was enabled through a contribution of \$2.3 million from Syncrude to the Nature Conservancy. This allowed the organization to purchase a timber quota in the proposed area from the Tallcree First Nation and return it to the Government of Alberta. In turn, the government cancelled the quota and created the new provincial park.

A haven for 68 species of special concern, the area is also home to three species at risk — wood bison, peregrine falcon and woodland caribou. In fact, the park encompasses 13 per cent of the core habitat for the Red Earth caribou herd's range.

Our government is committed to protecting our land, water and forests for future generations," said Shannon Phillips, Alberta's minister of environment and parks, at the official announcement. These protected areas will allow Alberta to establish the largest contiguous boreal protected area in the world. This historic achievement shows what can be accomplished when governments, First Nations, industry, and environmental organizations work together.

For Syncrude, the investment provides a land disturbance offset for future mining operations, including the proposed Mildred Lake Extension Project currently undergoing regulatory review. In its blog, the Pembina Institute called the partnership a game changer for managing impacts from industrial development and setting Alberta up for real world class resource development.

Syncrude managing director Doreen Cole was on hand for the announcement and spoke proudly of the company's involvement. This agreement supports our commitment to responsible development of the oil sands while contributing to the protection of the boreal forest for future generations," she said.

and Protect



Creating this protected area is a natural extension of our reclamation efforts and furthers our commitment to biodiversity conservation.

John Lounds, president and CEO of the Nature Conservancy of Canada, said the ecological value of the boreal forest cannot be overstated. This is a conservation achievement of global significance. Canada's boreal zone is part of a wide, green band that encircles the globe's northern latitudes. Nearly a third of the world's boreal zone lies within Canada, and its forest teems with life. Through this partnership, we have been able to make a significant step forward in advancing meaningful conservation in our country.

The Government of Alberta is proposing to enter into cooperative management arrangements with Indigenous communities for the parks. Indigenous advice and knowledge will inform decision making and management of these lands and the provincial government will provide resources to support the process.

This collaboration between the Nature Conservancy of Canada, the Governments of Canada and Alberta, and industry are aligned with the Tallcree Tribal Government's values regarding the preservation of the boreal forest, said Chief Rupert Meneen. "The boreal forest holds great value to the First Nations for exercising our traditional way of life and the quiet enjoyment of our Treaty Rights.

The Government of Alberta is also planning to integrate an Indigenous Guardian Program into these wildland provincial parks. Under this program, First Nations and Métis peoples will be hired to monitor the areas, help maintain the lands and provide education and outreach to park visitors.

The new wildland provincial parks ensure Indigenous peoples have places to hunt and fish with their families for generations to come, said Bill Loutitt, CEO of the McMurray Métis.

The Government of Alberta's commitment to work collaboratively with Indigenous communities to develop cooperative management plans provides a historic opportunity to have Indigenous knowledge and values influence land use planning.

In addition, the agreement assists Alberta in meeting its provincial goals under Canada Target 1 — the nation's pledge to the world to conserve 17 per cent of our land and inland waters by 2020.

The conservation area is home to three at-risk species — the peregrine falcon, woodland caribou and wood bison.



**McMurray Métis
Elder Massey**
lives off the land
and spends the
majority of his
time working
his family's
trapline located
62 kilometres south
of Fort McMurray.
Known legally
as Alcide Joseph
Floyde Boucher,
Massey is the
name he prefers
and the name
used by everyone
who knows him.

HOME AWAY FROM HOME



Massey is a quiet, stoic man who has seen many changes in the region. “When I arrived in this place it was a small town with only gravel roads,” he says.

As a traditional land user, Massey is adamant about preserving his way of life. He is proud when speaking about his adventures in the boreal forest.

By memory, he lists off all the animals he traps, what time of year they can be trapped and how he skins the animal. He also explains that several species need to be assessed and tagged by Alberta Fish and Wildlife before a sale. He also reflects on berry picking during the summer, or how he enjoys watching his beautiful dog Buck cool off in a nearby beaver pond.

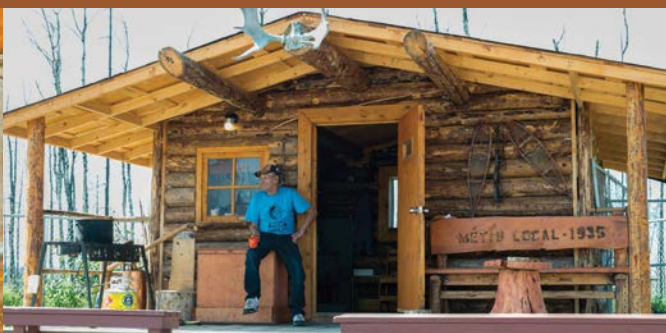
His presence and storytelling is engaging and encourages Métis members to get back on the land. “I’ve spent many days with Massey in the bush,” says Carmen Wells, regulatory manager for McMurray Métis. “Whether he is teaching me how to lay the traps or skin an animal, it’s always a positive experience and each time

McMurray Métis provides the annual trapping course to its members. As well, he is always willing to offer advice or a helping hand on trapping and hunting techniques.

As an Elder and Knowledge Holder with the Local, Massey is admired and well respected. “We’re a community and we take care of each other,” says Carmen. “Members of the association will deliver wood to Massey on their way out of town or even purchase basic groceries for him. It’s important we support him.” So important that McMurray Métis built a traditional trapper’s cabin next to the main administration building, reserved for Massey and Buck as a place to stay while in Fort McMurray.

“We use it when we come to town for my mail or sometimes doctor appointments,” says Massey. “It’s our home away from home. Buck loves it here and gets so excited when I get picked up to come to town.”

When not in use, the cabin serves as an interpretive site with pictures of hides and older traps on display. It is also used for the



I learn something new that connects me to my culture.”

As Carmen tells her story, Massey laughs with enthusiasm. “Yes, we could barely skin that animal together,” he says. “It was a tough job, but we did it!”

Massey routinely offers his assistance when the

monthly Cree Coffee Chat, an activity designed for members to come together and share information.

“Lots of folks stop by to chat and visit when I’m in town,” says Massey. “The location of this cabin is good and allows me to continue to stay connected.” ☕



“

Pansawan specializes in dried bison meat and we use the best bison available anywhere in the country.”

Pansawan

KEEPING Tradition ON THE TABLE

When it comes to bringing culture into the kitchen, no one does it better than Ian Gladue.

Ian, a member of the Bigstone Cree First Nation, owns and operates a fleet of food trucks and kiosks called Native Delights. His flair in the kitchen is well known around Edmonton, but now his flagship enterprise, Pansawan Dried Meats, is quickly gaining international renown. He recently became the first Indigenous owned business in the country to be approved by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to ship authentic traditional meats around the world.

“That was an exciting day for me,” smiles Ian. “I guess it goes to show that if you work hard, persevere and remain committed to the task, success can come to anyone.”

Ian understands first impressions are everything. “From the outset, we wanted to build a business that would maintain a positive image. And we did that. We are honest, humble, clean, sober, respectful and reliable, and as such we quickly gained the support of Edmonton and area’s Indigenous community and soon after everyone we came into contact with.”

Ian has always enjoyed cooking and looking after others. As a young man, he dreamed of owning his own business to escape poverty and earn enough money to care for his mom and family.

“The answer came to me in 2003 when I worked for a catering company whose venue that

weekend was the Poundmaker’s Pow Wow in St. Albert,” he explains.

“The work was pleasing, the venue was great and the crowds were large. We had a line up all day and I knew that this was something I could be good at.”

It also gave Ian the opportunity to launch a business that would honour and showcase his culture. However, it took Ian several years and numerous attempts. “It wasn’t

“...if you work hard, persevere and remain committed to the task, success can come to anyone.”



easy, but then it never is when you are starting from scratch,” he explains. “It cost more than \$100,000 to start out with a new truck and I just didn’t have that kind of money.”

To earn the cash he needed, Ian worked on the oil rigs. An electrician by trade, he earned good money, but being young, he notes, “I spent it almost as fast as I earned it.”

After 11 years on the rigs, Ian pulled up stakes and moved to Edmonton to pursue his dream. “I didn’t have the big money but I did save enough to purchase a reliable vehicle, do the necessary work to ensure that it would pass all inspections and get it on the road.”

In April 2013, Ian received his approval from Alberta Health and immediately put the truck to work. “One half hour after we opened the doors, we were sold out,” he remembers. “It was unbelievable. Over the course of the next few weeks we sold a lot of food. At first, it was mostly Native clientele but after a few days we saw different cultures in line to try our food. And they kept coming back. A year later, we had earned enough to buy the \$100,000 vehicle and business has continued to thrive ever since.”

Pansawan currently sells traditional dried meats in more than 65 locations across Alberta, the Northwest Territories and western Canada. Ian expects the business to grow even larger once he begins shipping products outside North America.

A LIFT FOR YOUNG APPRENTICES

Chance Hamelin grew up in the Wood Buffalo region during the height of the oil sands boom. Having seen plenty of cranes reshaping his hometown of Fort McMurray as a teenager, a career as a crane operator would seem natural.

"I was actually interested in social work as a teenager," says the Anzac Métis, who graduated from Fort McMurray Composite High School in 2012. "A crane operator apprenticeship was an opportunity that just happened to come up."

Chance is the first apprentice to come through the Bring on Board (BoB) program put together by the joint venture formed by Fort McMurray #468 First Nation's Christina River Enterprises (CRE) and NCSG Crane and Heavy Haul.


"We started in 1987 building pallets and it has evolved into meaningful opportunities," says #468 First Nation Chief Ron Kreutzer. "The Nation has worked hard to build capacity and education is an important part of that along with our youth. It's important to bring opportunities that allow us to train, educate and bring hope to our youth. They are our future."

Andy Popko, NCSG vice president for Indigenous relations and major accounts, sees Chance opening more doors for Indigenous people.

"Chance is a top young apprentice. We see a lot of potential in the Aboriginal community so we've started taking our mobile training unit to test for operators in remote communities," Andy says. "The average age of a crane operator is mid-50s. If we don't start replacing people who will retire soon, our industry is going to be in trouble. A major lift involves 75 tradespeople, but you need that one crane operator to make the lift."

Samantha Whalen, #468 band councillor, also speaks highly of the crane apprentice. "Chance isn't a band member but he's recognized as a young leader in this community. He can speak to the youth and build confidence that will get more people interested in pursuing this as a potential career."

And Chance believes his success can be repeated by others. "The talent is there. They just need to talk to the right people," he says. "I've had great mentors at NCSG, guys like our yard foreman Dave Wilson and Alec Dion. All I needed was the opportunity and the BoB program gave that to me."



Chance Hamelin enjoys the challenges and rewards of his crane apprenticeship.



Possibility and PARTNERSHIPS



When the Fort McKay Group of Companies first began working on Syncrude's Mildred Lake site, you could count the number of employees on two hands – and have several fingers left over.

Today, the Group employs more than 1,000 people who do everything from move earth in the mine to deliver mail to reclamation to supply chain management. There's virtually no part of Syncrude's sprawling operations untouched by the Group's services.

"We value collaborative partnerships with our clients such as Syncrude," says CEO Mathieu Leger. "We're committed to delivering quality, reliable and dependable services while maintaining a competitive cost

advantage for our clients in the oil sands."

The growing amount of business with the Group, owned by the Fort McKay First Nation, helped Syncrude achieve a major milestone at the end of 2017. Syncrude spent a record \$342 million in 2017 with Aboriginal-owned businesses – 10 per cent of total annual procurement – to surpass the \$3 billion mark in total spending.

"Having local companies who provide cost-competitive goods and services is essential," says Syncrude's managing director Doreen Cole. "They have demonstrated the ability to help meet our commitments for a

safe, reliable and cost-competitive operation."

Syncrude is a strong believer in the shared value that can be generated from developing businesses with First Nations and Métis communities in the region and today works with more than 50 Aboriginal-owned companies.

"We are committed to ensuring Aboriginal people share in the opportunities to develop the oil sands," Doreen says. "Working together is the right thing to do."

Chief Ron Kreutzer of the #468 First Nation appreciates the company's efforts. "Syncrude has created a

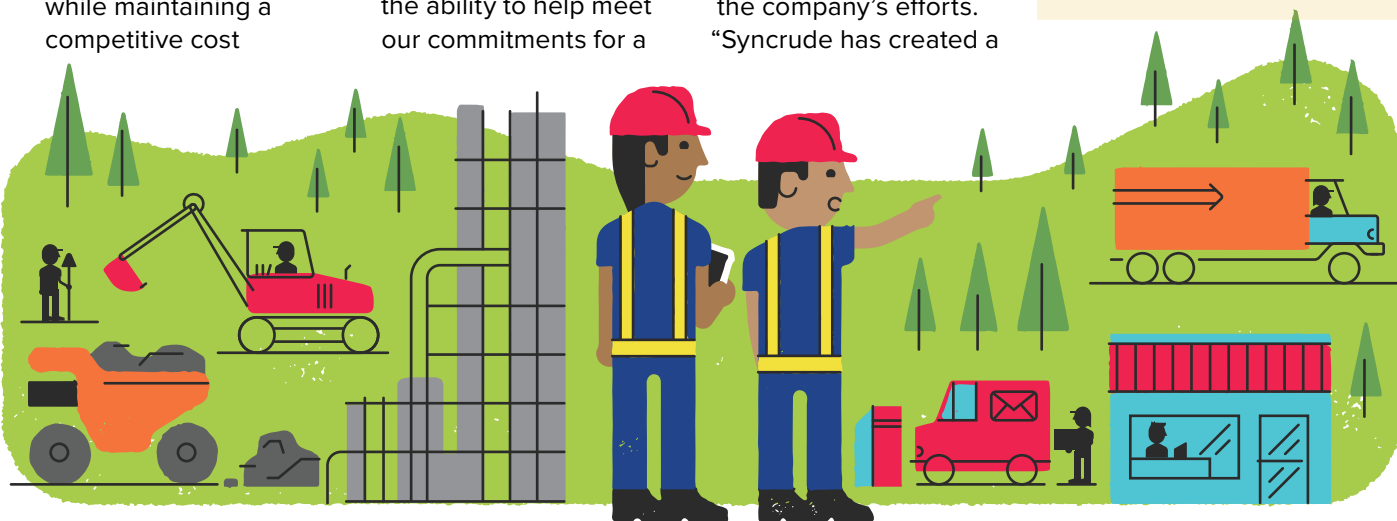
social conscience within their stakeholder relation practices," he says. "Acknowledging the necessity to include

Indigenous people in the prosperity of resource extraction is only the beginning of a healthy long-term relationship with our Nation."

SYNCRUDE ACHIEVES TOP CERTIFICATION

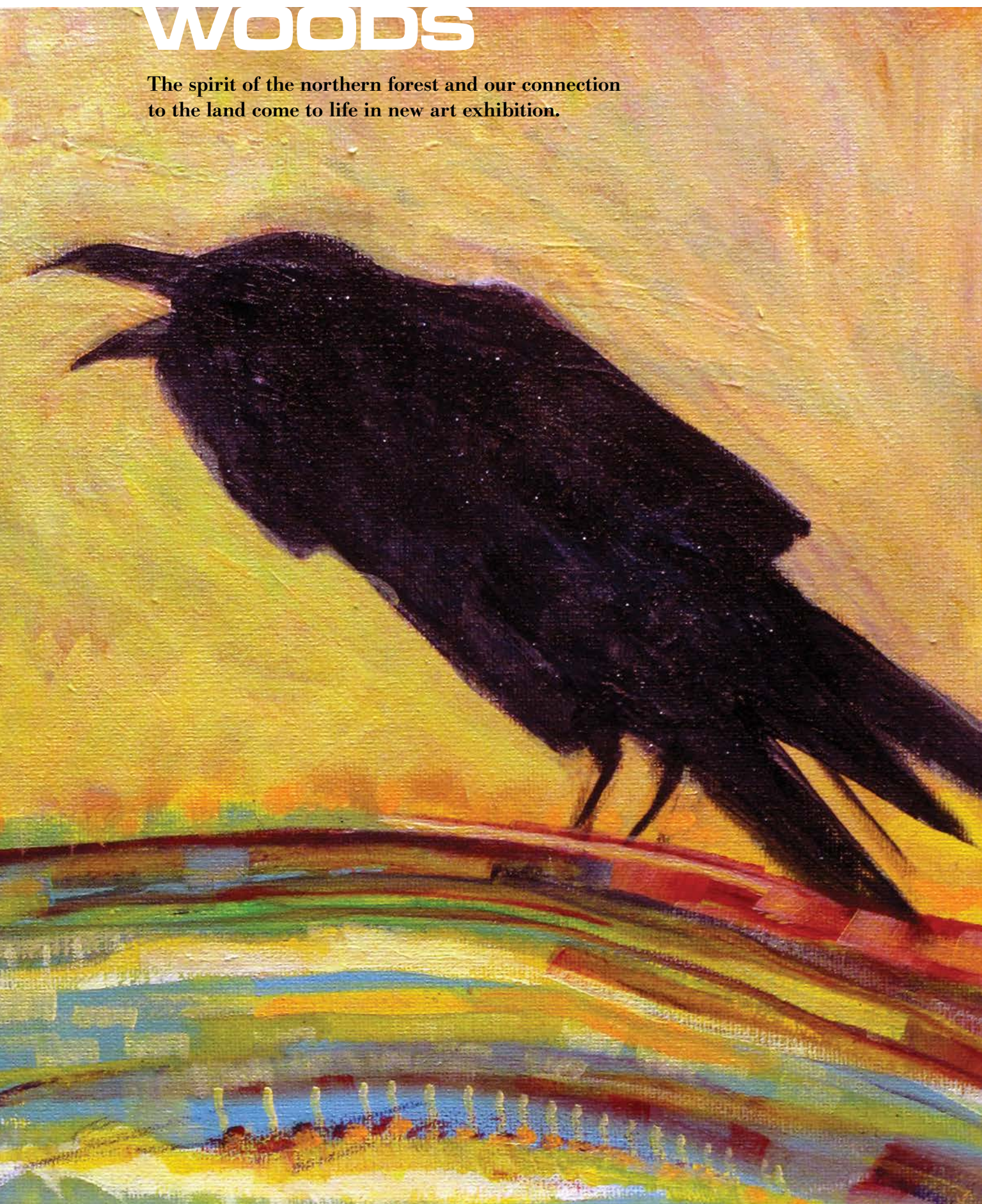
Syncrude achieved certification with the Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) Program in 2018, according to the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB).

This marks the seventh time Syncrude has been recognized at the top gold level. The PAR Program provides a high level of assurance through independent, third party verification of company reports on measurable outcomes and initiatives in four performance areas: Leadership Actions, Employment, Business Development, and Community Relationships. These reports are then reviewed by an independent jury of Aboriginal businesspeople who assign the final certification level.



INTO THE WOODS

The spirit of the northern forest and our connection to the land come to life in new art exhibition.



Pen and ink. Paint and brush. Seed beads and natural materials. Canada's Indigenous artists draw their inspiration from the world around them. The latest travelling exhibition from the Art Gallery of Alberta (AGA) features artists reflecting on the boreal forest, creating a sense of reality where one feels the weather, smells the flowers and sees the animals through diverse and unique insights.

"When we look at the Indigenous world view, it's really articulated through visual arts," says Sharon Kootenay, a founding member of the Aboriginal Arts Council of Alberta. Together, she and AGA curator and manager Shane Golby aim to explore this perspective through *Woodlands*, the new Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition (Trex).

Featured artists include Sharon herself, as well as Linus Woods, Ekti (Margaret) Cardinal and Laura Simeon. "The vision and foresight of each artist really shines through as they tell stories of what they've learned and what they believe — individually and collectively," Sharon says.

Sharon mentions the work of Dakota/Ojibway artist Linus Woods, who attended junior and senior high school in Fort McMurray, as an example of how Indigenous people view animals and their place in the world. "The creatures in his work are always in their natural environment, but Linus' seemingly second sight also depicts the energies of the land."

Linus enjoys creating art influenced by his home at Manitoba's Long Plain First Nation. He works with oils and acrylics to create pieces of work that often feature an array of geometric shapes and collaged images. "I really enjoy the work I do when it reflects the positive nature of our community and our culture," he says.

LEFT:

Linus Woods
***Raven*, 2017**

Acrylic on canvas

Aboriginal Arts Council of Alberta – Permanent Collection



The intricate beadwork of Bushe River Dene artist Laura Simeon portrays another connection to the land and is beautifully expressed on moose hide gauntlets (gloves). "Laura created the beadwork for that moose and, in doing so, is showing gratitude to the animal because it fed and clothed their family, fed their Elders and offered its life to do so," says Sharon.

The talents of self-declared and "committed bead-a-holic" Ekti (Margaret) Cardinal are also featured in the exhibit, providing a glimpse into her rich cultural upbringing. Originally from the Saddle Lake First Nation and now a resident of Jossard, Alberta, Ekti was just eight years old when she began learning beadwork with her three sisters. She likes to tell stories through her craft, crediting her father's mother for passing along her knowledge and experience. "For 56 years, I've tried to stay true to my grandmother's way of beading," says Ekti, adding she only works with smoked tanned hides of deer, elk and moose.

The *Woodlands* exhibit is currently on tour throughout Alberta, with funding provided by Syncrude. Says Sharon, "By using paint, pigments, natural materials and seed beads, the visual art and artisan works that are featured celebrate the wonder of Alberta's boreal forest and the remarkable perspectives, sense of place, and cultural practices of contemporary Indigenous artists."

IMAGES TOP TO BOTTOM

Anna Chohkolay

***Caribou Hair Tufting/Beadwork*, 2011**

Traditional Fine Craft – Tufting

Aboriginal Arts Council of Alberta – Permanent Collection

Angelique Merasty

***Birch Bark Biting*, circa 1980**

Traditional Fine Craft – Birch Bark

Aboriginal Arts Council of Alberta – Permanent Collection

Laura Simeon

***Men's Beaded Gauntlets*, 2007**

Traditional Fine Craft – Beadwork

Aboriginal Arts Council of Alberta – Permanent Collection

Linus Woods

***Rabbit*, 2017**

Acrylic on canvas

Aboriginal Arts Council of Alberta – Permanent Collection

Dolly Metchoyah

***Moose Hair Tufted Birch Bark Basket*, 2011**

Traditional Fine Craft – Tufting

Aboriginal Arts Council of Alberta – Permanent Collection



OLD LAND **NEW** BEGINNINGS

Local First Nations
and Métis people
help Syncrude
better understand
the land.





Everything is taken with the understanding you only take what is needed and you give back. It is important we leave the land the way we found it.”

For generations, Betty Woodward’s family have called Wood Buffalo home. And while the region’s name may have changed over the years, her words reflect a wisdom that has stood the test of time.

A member of the Fort McMurray #468 First Nation, Betty speaks eloquently and passionately about her respect for the environment. “When harvesting trees for firewood, my practice is to plant something in its place, whether it is another tree or a tobacco plant.”

As two participants in Syncrude’s newly created Reclamation Engagement Focus Group (REFG), Betty and her husband Bill, nicknamed “Bull,” share their experiences and traditional knowledge to help guide the company’s reclamation activities. The group, established in 2017, includes representatives from First Nations and Métis Locals.

“Syncrude values the perspective of local communities that surround our operation,” says Colleen Legdon, the company’s manager of community relations. “That is why after years of consultation, we heard loud and clear that community members wanted a greater voice in Syncrude’s reclamation efforts.”

The REFG also brings together both Elders and youth, which is

welcomed by its members. “It is important we are able to pass down valuable information to the next generation,” says Betty. “Just as my great, great grandfather, who was a former Chief of Fort McMurray First Nation, did for my family.”

To date, the group has been to several Syncrude reclaimed areas to participate in bird monitoring. They have also picked berries, visited natural sites in Anzac and Cheecham, and learned about the seed collection program. “Collecting seeds is all about preserving the native species in this area for generations to come,” says Eric Girard, Syncrude’s land specialist. Seeds are stored at the Alberta Tree Improvement and Seed Centre outside of Smoky Lake, which the group visited in October. It is home to about 53,000 kilograms of tree, shrub and grass seed, with over half belonging to oil sands and mining companies. Seedlings are grown at a nearby nursery and, when ready, are transported to Syncrude for use in reclamation. “It was important for community members to see how the process works from collection to replanting,” says Eric.

Betty is pleased by what she has seen so far and has high hopes for the focus group. “Our role is to help Syncrude improve their reclamation activities and ensure community members understand what reclamation is ongoing,” she says. “I know this group will have a positive impact.”

TOP PHOTOS L to R

Members of the Reclamation Engagement Focus Group (REFG) gather to observe bird monitoring activities.

Métis Local 1935 Elder Lorrie Gallagher learns how birds are gently captured and banded to allow for future monitoring.

The bird monitoring team’s mobile unit.

A captured yellow warbler prior to being released with a new identification band.

Reintroducing traditional plant species, like Labrador tea, is a primary goal when reclaiming natural areas.

BOTTOM PHOTOS L to R

REFG members observe the banding of a bird.

A nest is revealed in one of the site’s wooden bird houses.

A diverse range of native plant species thrive in the recently reclaimed area.

The team heads off to check out another location.

Bernadette Lacorde, Theresa Donavon and Harvey Sykes gather by a commemorative plaque located on one of Syncrude’s reclaimed sites.



A portrait of April Eve Wiberg, a woman with long brown hair, wearing a white dress with large pink and green floral prints. She has traditional Indigenous face paint: a vertical red line down the center of her face and a horizontal row of white dots across her forehead. She is also wearing a beaded necklace and a feathered headdress. The background is dark and textured.

WALKING TOWARDS AWARENESS

Growing up, April Eve Wiberg experienced racism firsthand through the comments that classmates at her predominantly white rural farm school were making about her, her sister and her family.

"Everybody knew that our mom was Native and [there was] a lot of name calling, and it was very hurtful," says April Eve. "When you look in the mirror and see your mother who you think is this gorgeous Indian princess, and people are so full of hatred just because of the colour of your skin? It's very confusing for a young person."

Though the experience was incredibly difficult, April Eve always knew that discrimination was wrong — and that attitude is part of what propelled the Mikisew Cree First Nation member on her current path. "I knew it was wrong and I knew that there was a world outside of the world we knew, and I wanted to be a part of that somehow."

It wasn't a straightforward journey, though. "I chose the wrong road, I chose to get involved with the wrong crowd, and I was lost for many years, but I always had that spirit inside of me," says April Eve.

After hitting rock bottom in her late 20s, she realized that there was more out there for her, that she wanted to be helping others. She took the first step by volunteering with the Canadian Native Friendship Centre in Edmonton, and immediately loved it. "I encourage people a lot to volunteer because you can meet some really incredible people," says April Eve.

The spark that ignited the idea for her grassroots group, The Stolen Sisters and Brothers Awareness Movement, was an Aboriginal HIV awareness walk led by a woman in Edmonton that April Eve witnessed while she was living there. "I was really inspired by her and her strength and her courage," she says. A few months later, when doing some research, April Eve was hit with the realization that there just wasn't enough awareness being raised about missing or murdered Indigenous women and girls — and she thought back to that inspiring walk, and how she could change that.

The first Stolen Sisters Awareness walk, which started from the Canadian Native Friendship Centre, took place in 2007 with about 100 supporters. April Eve has led the walk every year since, and it continues to grow — and the Stolen Sisters and Brothers Awareness Movement continues to see where and how they can help. "We have to look beyond the awareness now," says April Eve. "We have to look at prevention and supporting people that are still living in vulnerability."

While she leads a busy life, her passion for activism remains a constant. Says April Eve, "It's work that has to be done, it can't end. It has to keep going because the issue itself is not getting any better, and that has to change."

In 2018, April Eve was recognized as a Global Woman of Vision. Supported by Syncrude, the program celebrates the accomplishments of women in the Edmonton area. ●

CHANGE FOR THE BETTER



**In
Canada,
there are
an estimated
43,000 Indigenous-
owned businesses.**

And that number could increase even further thanks to a new initiative from the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB).

Called *Supply Change*, the initiative is a result of a Canada-wide survey of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal companies, conducted by the CCAB and Environics Research. Results showed a mutual interest in creating new procurement opportunities for Indigenous-owned businesses, and improving those that already exist.

"CCAB members recognize procurement as an important driver of economic reconciliation and development for Aboriginal communities because of the revenue it generates for Aboriginal businesses, and the positive relationships that are established with government and corporations as a result," says J.P. Gladu, CCAB president.

Over the next three years, *Supply Change* aims to establish a national approach to Aboriginal procurement. This includes recruiting business leaders to serve as Aboriginal procurement champions, creating Canada's largest directory of businesses which are independently certified as at least 51 per cent Aboriginal-owned and -operated, and establishing an online forum for businesses to connect with qualified Aboriginal suppliers.

Syncrude is one of 34 companies that have come on board so far to support the initiative. "Working with Aboriginal companies has been an area of importance for Syncrude since the very beginning," says Syncrude vice president Greg Fuhr. "It's not only been the right thing to do but it makes good business sense and helps us to strengthen vital relationships with those in our community."

To learn more about *Supply Change*, visit www.ccab.com/supplychange.

If you need someone to get the job done, look no further than Brenda Kehewin Vanguard. A community leader and Chief of the Kehewin First Nation from 2015 to 2018, she's enthusiastic, determined and intent on change. Results oriented, she also oversaw the beginnings of construction on a water treatment plant that will end a decade long boil water advisory.

"As a community member, I knew there was room for improvement. As Chief, I did what was possible to make life better for everyone," she says.

With more than 35 years of administrative and managerial expertise, Brenda followed in the steps of her ancestors when she was elected Chief. She initially ran for council but won by such a large majority that her supporters

housing. The band built a sixplex and seven individual housing units in the past two years with six more planned for the immediate future. They are also considering a second sixplex for Elders and, for men in the community who currently have no home of their own, converting sea cans, or shipping containers, into housing units. "They are relatively inexpensive, quite versatile and very durable," says Brenda. "They are also widely used in the modular home industry."

Even with this progress, Brenda says there's more to be done. "Federal funding doesn't cover the costs for our students to attend school in urban centres. The community is working to improve the education portfolio by building a new school, bringing in more outside programs and establishing an employment training program."

Leading by Example

encouraged her to seek the top job. "I was voted in as Chief with a commitment to lead with integrity, political honesty and a strong set of principles," she says.


Maintaining the values established by a long line of Kehewin leaders, Brenda also followed the guidance of Elders and traditional teachings. "I've spent the past three years focusing on initiatives to restore integrity in leadership, to bring balance to the community, to improve housing and education, and to replace old infrastructure," she says. "I also want to encourage and empower women to discover their own voice and be everything they can be."

The results speak for themselves. In addition to the water treatment plant, Brenda and the Kehewin Council made significant strides in

Earlier this year, the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women (IAAW) recognized Brenda with the Dorothy McDonald Leadership Award, sponsored by Syncrude, at the annual Esquao Gala.

"I was taken completely by surprise. I am very grateful to be honoured," says Brenda. "I want to see every young woman succeed and be proud of who they are."

Brenda, recently appointed to the Assembly of First Nations Women's Council by Regional Chief Marlene Poitras, encourages women to become leaders in their communities. Cooperation, she adds, is also essential. "It's important to promote good relationships with business, industry and all levels of government to help promote positive outcomes."



“I want to see every young woman succeed and be proud of who they are.”

Boys with Braids



A sense of identity and a foundation for success

For Michael Linklater, his long braided hair allows him to honour his ancestors and culture.

Michael is Nehiyaw (Cree), and comes from the Thunderchild First Nation, in Saskatchewan. Best known for his accomplishments in sport, Michael is one of the top ranked 3-on-3 basketball players in the world. He has led the University of Saskatchewan Huskies to their first national championship and played with Team Saskatoon in the International Basketball Federation 3-on-3 World Tour Final.

Despite his undeniable gift for sport, his path wasn't always so clear. As a kid growing up in Thunder Bay and later Saskatoon, Michael remembers being bullied relentlessly for his braids. "There was a lot I had to go through being a visible minority, but having a proud sense of my identity was something that allowed me to deal with that adversity," says Michael.

"There was a lot I had to go through being a visible minority but having a proud sense of my identity was something that allowed me to deal with that adversity."

Although he didn't grow up in Thunderchild, Michael has always maintained close ties to the community. "My grandparents, who raised me,

instilled the importance of staying connected to our culture," he says. "It gave me the foundation to succeed in mainstream sports."

Later as an adult with his own family, he realized the issues he faced in childhood still existed for his boys. "They were coming home from school, telling me they wanted to cut their hair. They were saying the same thing I was telling my mom 20 years earlier."

Through his reach on social media, he could see these issues not only existed for his children but for many people across North America, and realized something needed to be done. It was then Boys with Braids was born.

Boys with Braids is an international movement that encourages Indigenous youth to continue growing their hair. It also serves as a platform to educate and spread awareness of its cultural significance. While beliefs or traditions can vary from community to community, or even person to person, long, braided hair can symbolize an Indigenous person's connection to their ancestors, Earth and Creator. It can also signify a transitional period in life, from boy to man, or be seen as a source of strength and power.

Despite starting the initiative, Michael says it is not his or for anyone to own. "It is for any community that wants to host their own gathering and share their teachings, in their own way. It's taken on an identity of its own," he says. Since its inception in 2016, gatherings have been hosted across North America, from New Mexico, to Ottawa, British Columbia and beyond.

"It warms my heart to see the young boys and men gathering, and the joy and pride on their faces," says Michael. "These are the same boys who went into these gatherings with the thought of cutting their hair."

Because of his significant contributions, Michael was honoured with a 2018 Indspire Award. These awards, supported in part by Syncrude, are given to individuals

who provide inspiration for young Indigenous people across Canada, and help to promote Indigenous contributions throughout the country.

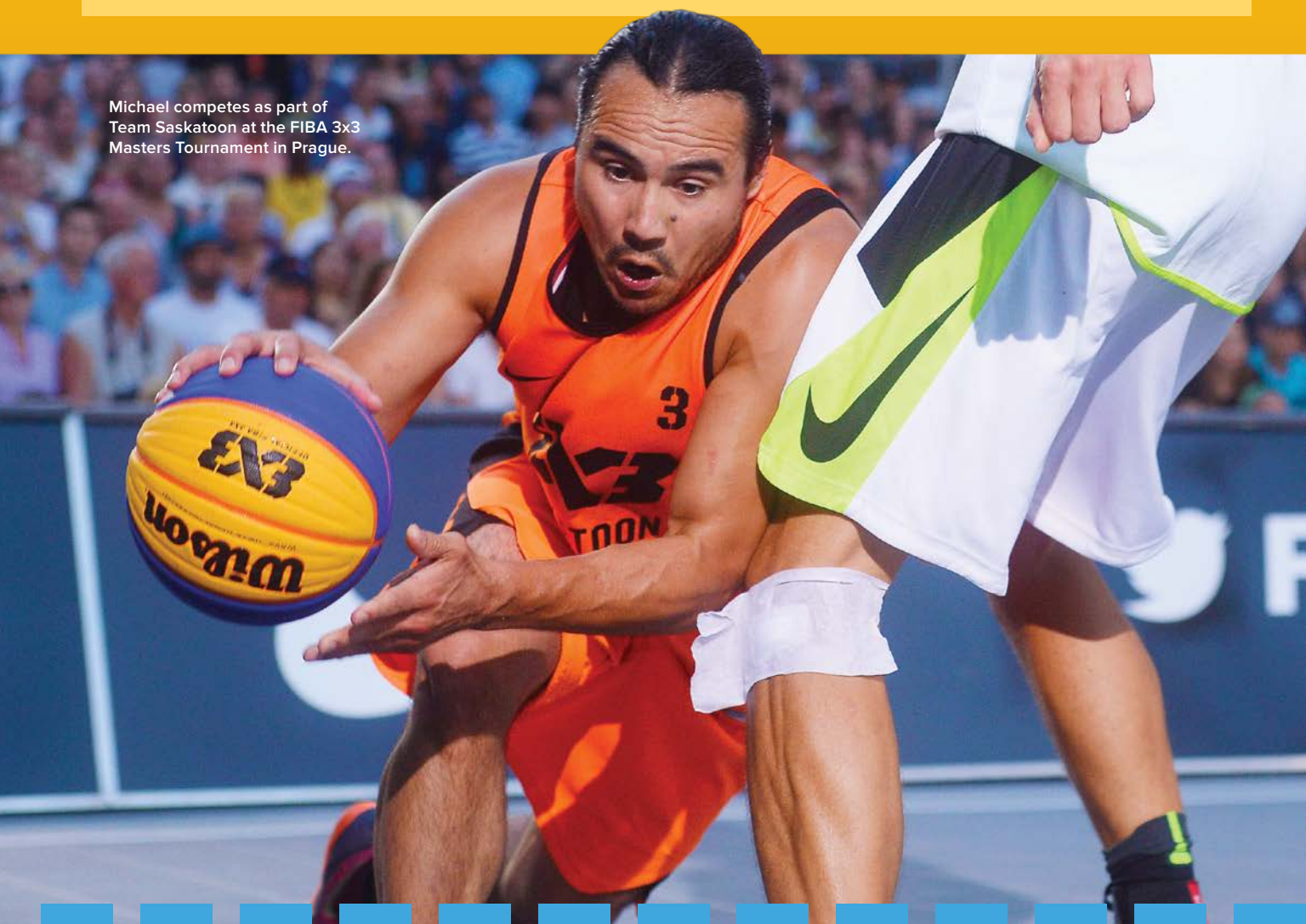
"My mom and dad were always helping people, whether through prayer, with food or just talking to them. They were always helping people and I remember saying from a young age that was something I wanted to do with my life."

Michael has turned his success in sport into a platform to help inspire youth. He is the owner and head coach of Prime Basketball Development, which teaches young basketball players how to become champions on and off the court. He has visited schools and First Nations communities across Canada to share his story and to host a variety of basketball clinics.

Recently, Michael spoke at the Olympism in Action forum in Buenos Aires and at the 2018 Summer Youth Olympic Games for 3-on-3 basketball. He is currently competing on the world tour, with the 2020 Olympic Games in sight. You can follow Michael's journey in sport and Boys with Braids through Instagram.

 **@michael_linklater**

Michael competes as part of Team Saskatoon at the FIBA 3x3 Masters Tournament in Prague.



HERITAGE TRACKS

If you ask Mel Boostrom about his top priorities in life, he'd answer, "Family, music, work." And interwoven among all three is his culture.

Mel is proudly Métis. His musical tastes, while widespread, are rooted in the music he learned as a child — country and western, folk-roots and traditional Métis. Born in Fort McMurray, Mel can trace his ancestry back as far as written records go in northern Alberta.

His family has always lived off the land. He trapped, hunted and fished as a child. He worked with his dad during the holidays and saved up enough to buy his first home by 18. A strong work ethic is definitely in his genes.

"For my parents, the land was their food store and we've learned to use the land in traditional ways for as long as I can remember," he says. "There's a story of my grandfather taking my dad, who was about 10 at the time, and two of his sisters up to the Northwest Territories to go caribou hunting. This would have been in the early 1930s. They got up there, and took enough food for three or four days,

figuring they'd supplement their supplies with caribou meat. After five days out, my grandfather calls it, says, 'There's nothing coming through. The caribou have changed their path.' Now they're running out of food and their supplies are dwindling. So they started walking back to Fort McMurray. It took them two weeks, hunting all the way to feed themselves."

While coming from such tough stock, Mel is also known for his musical talents. He sings, plays the guitar, mandolin, banjo, drums and piano. He's on the road most weekends playing with his daughters Kelsea and Karlie. "They're so talented," he says. "My beautiful young ladies. They can go wherever they want to in music."

They've gone pretty far already. The Boostroms have shared the stage with renowned artists such as Dwight Yoakam, Dierks Bentley, Corb Lund and the Barenaked Ladies, and have opened for KISS, Tom Cochrane and Stompin' Tom Connors.

"I've met many great musicians," says Mel. "On the whole they are warm and friendly. One in particular was Reba McEntire. The first time we met, I hung back to let my family go ahead. My younger girl was about six and she started talking to Reba about her TV show and how much she loved it. Then she asks her, 'Reba, can



Mel Boostrom

I get a hug?' Then Reba replies, 'Yes darlin,' come here.'

"Pretty soon she's hugging both my girls, then my wife. I'm standing about 10 feet away, watching, when Reba pokes her head round the side of my family, looks at me and says, 'Come on darlin.' I know you want a hug too.'"

Mel loves the connections his performances make with people and he looks forward to making more in his new role at Syncrude as a community relations specialist. He's already had a long career with the company, starting in 1995 after receiving an environmental diploma from Keyano College. "When I started classes, May-Britt Jensen was a recruiter at Syncrude. She told me she'd call me when I was done. Two years later, a week after I graduated, I received a call telling me she had an interview set up for me."

A job offer followed and he's been with the company ever since. Says Mel, "I've always been grateful that Syncrude has accommodated me, the music and my cultural heritage."

A career in health care seems a long way from the starry-eyed world of moviemaking, but Raven Gorman's journey brought her back to where she knew she always belonged.

Raven wanted to be a nurse when she was a little girl but she veered away from her childhood dream and spent a year studying film in Vancouver, after graduating high school. While it was a wonderful experience, it also confirmed her original inclination was the right one.

"Going to Vancouver allowed me to be independent for the first time," says Raven. "I learned how to look after myself and to be myself. But

Don now works at Syncrude and both Raven and her sister worked for the company as summer students earlier this year. "My parents continually inspire me," says Raven, who helped out on the community relations team. "My dad is adventurous and has never been afraid to try anything, including a jump-shift to a career as a millwright apprentice when he could have been settling down to retirement."

Raven admires her parents' courage, adding they've always been understanding and supportive. "They set the example for my sister and me to never be afraid and always try something new."

Raven's journey has also taken her to many places in the world, including Costa Rica, where she worked with Habitat for Humanity building schools and helping



Above: Raven Gorman

Below: Don, Destiny and Raven Gorman

A JOURNEY COMES FULL CIRCLE

while art, specifically photography, will always be important to me, it didn't feel fulfilling enough as a career. And while I loved my time living in a big city, it's not where my heart is. Smaller communities suit me more."

Raven is now studying nursing at Keyano College and plans on staying in the community when she graduates. "I love nursing because it is such a caring profession," she says.

Raven traces her family roots to Fort Chipewyan. Her father, Don, managed the Hudson's Bay Company while her mother, Connie Mercredi, worked for the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation. They later moved to Fort McMurray, where Raven and her sister Destiny were born.



to restore a home for a woman confined to a wheelchair. "Travel changes your perspective," she says. "You meet so many different people and experience all those different cultures. It opens your eyes and broadens your perspective."

Her sense of adventure is shaping her future as she decides which path to take. She is Dene on her mother's side and would like to work in the smaller regional communities.

"Nursing is an intensely personal career and I want to make a difference where I am needed most.

I am really interested in family health and want to do work that matters."

BACK TO HER

ROOTS



Melissa Bidniak believes that if you look hard enough, there's a positive way forward for everyone.

"It's very easy to be discouraged, especially when it comes to choosing a path after high school," says Melissa. "I changed my mind more times than I can count while moving through my degree, and it was okay. The more I learned, the more opportunities I had to find what I truly enjoy."

Melissa, now in her fourth year of a commerce degree with a major in accounting, is the 2018 recipient of the Syncrude Bachelor of Commerce Aboriginal Award at MacEwan University. This annual scholarship is awarded to an individual who self-identifies as Aboriginal and focuses on volunteerism and leadership – two skills Melissa embodies.

66

Throughout the last four years, I was exposed to countless courses, perspectives, and career paths that allowed me to explore where I fit in the world."

She saw a commerce degree as a versatile tool not only professionally but personally. It was an avenue to discover and explore her passion and purpose. "Throughout the last four years, I was exposed to countless courses, perspectives, and career paths that allowed me to explore where I fit in the world," she says.

University taught Melissa about her future and her past. Growing up, she says she wasn't highly exposed to her Aboriginal culture because of the geographical distance between her and her family. It wasn't until she started at MacEwan that she began to dive deeper. "I feel very privileged to go to a school that supports its relationship with the First Nation and Métis community

as it has allowed me a unique opportunity to connect with my culture through a variety of programs and course work."

Melissa has also used her time at MacEwan to contribute to the community within the university. "I have always valued helping those who are behind me because of the overwhelming support I was shown by those who I have followed."

Whether serving as vice president of the accounting club, or volunteering on the student advisory committee, she is an important voice and advocate for students.

"For all of the young people who struggle with a path forward, my advice is to always try your best and go from there," she says. "The university community has provided me so many opportunities that commonly go underutilized because students forget that they are not doing this alone."

As her Bachelor degree draws to a close, Melissa isn't slowing down. Next year, she is moving on to pursue a Masters in Professional Accounting at the Edwards School of Business in Saskatchewan, where she plans to continue her journey of discovery. 🌟

CHARICE COUTU

A Proud Future

Much of Charice Coutu's family history is hard to trace. She knows her grandfather Morris Coutu was born in 1923 in the Red River area of Manitoba. He was one of 22 or 24 children, but no one is too sure as there are no records. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, drought and locusts devastated the land, forcing the young Métis boy to ride the rails to Alberta looking for work.

Charice's grandfather had two advantages when it came to finding a job. "He was used to farm labour of the hardest sort and he could pass for white," she says. "Being able to pass meant he could get a job and he wasn't sent to the back of the line as many Indigenous people were at the time."

Farm labourers weren't called up to fight in the Second World War and Morris soon started a family. While his children were aware of their father's Métis heritage, they were never taught its history or traditions. He spoke a mix of French and Cree, but they didn't know it was Michif and didn't learn it.

Charice never knew her grandfather. But listening to stories about him from her parents inspired her to learn more about her Métis background. As early as elementary school, she identified herself to the school system as Métis and began the journey of rediscovering her heritage and reclaiming her roots.

Born in Calgary, Charice spent some of her childhood in Kamloops. Her father's work in the oil industry also took the

family to Saudi Arabia. From there, they had the opportunity to visit many countries in the Middle East, Africa and Europe.

"I saw many different cultures and ways of life while growing up," she says. "We were never a tourist family. We always went out and met the local people wherever we went. I remember Kenya in particular, seeing the tribes still living traditionally on the land, trying to preserve their way of life. It was fascinating."

Charice is studying social work at Thompson Rivers University and was employed this past summer with CAREERS: The Next Generation in Fort McMurray. She previously worked for Stepping Stones, an organization helping at risk youth. "I loved the value of my work at Stepping Stones. CAREERS was a new step for me, giving me opportunities to grow in my future vocation."

Supported by Syncrude, CAREERS is a non profit organization providing youth awareness of employment options and helping students earn while they learn through apprenticeships and internships. Charice worked as a career coach for Indigenous youth, helping them in practical matters related to finding positions.

"Interviews are intimidating," she says. "I've been coaching people on how to answer questions, fill in application forms and apply online, even how to dress for success." As part of her work, she also created a resource database so the program will be available for years to come.



Charice Coutu in class with students in Fort McKay.

"Working with Aboriginal students has helped me to come to terms with my own heritage," says Charice. "When I finish my degree, I will be looking for a way to work in local communities."

Charice is on the journey of a lifetime and continues to explore and value her Métis culture. "It was sad my grandfather had to deny himself to survive. I hope he would be proud of me today and encouraged to know I don't have to hide who I am or where I'm from."

“

I saw many different cultures and ways of life while growing up.”

”



ENVIRONMENT UPDATE

ACTIONS, AERIALS
AND ANNIVERSARIES

Delivering on Tailings Management

Syncrude's commitment to responsible operations is unwavering, which is why the Mildred Lake fluid fine tails (FFT) centrifuge plant remained busy despite the summer outage to the upgrading complex.

"Syncrude has made commitments to the Alberta government for managing our tailings and we're committed to delivering them," says Dwayne Flett, Syncrude's business team leader in tailings & lease development. "Our team understands the importance of continuing to do what we do regardless of what is happening in other parts of the operation."

Syncrude treated 6.3 million cubic metres of FFT at Mildred Lake in 2016 and 7.8 million cubic metres in 2017. Maintaining that high standard is important, Dwayne says.

"Being a responsible operator includes meeting these commitments, which is something the team in tailings & lease development understands. We're ready for that challenge."

In addition to the centrifuge plant, Syncrude's Mildred Lake tailings management plan includes composite tailings and water capping. "We invested about \$3 billion to develop different technologies for managing tailings," says Dwayne, who has worked for Syncrude for 20 years. "Having different technologies provides us flexibility to meet our commitments."

A Bird's-Eye View of Reclamation

This past June, Syncrude enlisted the help of a video drone crew to get footage of South Bison Hills, the Sandhill Fen, Kingfisher and Gateway Hill reclaimed areas. All of this will help Syncrude showcase each of the areas as their own success story, but also in a combined video to demonstrate how the reclamation process works.



Syncrude dredges fluid fine tails from the Mildred Lake Settling Basin and turns it into a reclamation material at the centrifuge plant.



Syncrude has made commitments to the Alberta government for managing our tailings and we're committed to delivering them."

While remarkable to experience reclaimed land on foot, the aerial version offers a unique perspective. The first of four videos is a bird's-eye view of South Bison Hills, a forested area approximately 380 hectares large. The site can also be seen from a public viewpoint just off Highway 63 a few kilometres south of Syncrude's Mildred Lake operation. The site is also home to a portion of Syncrude's bison herd during the summer months.

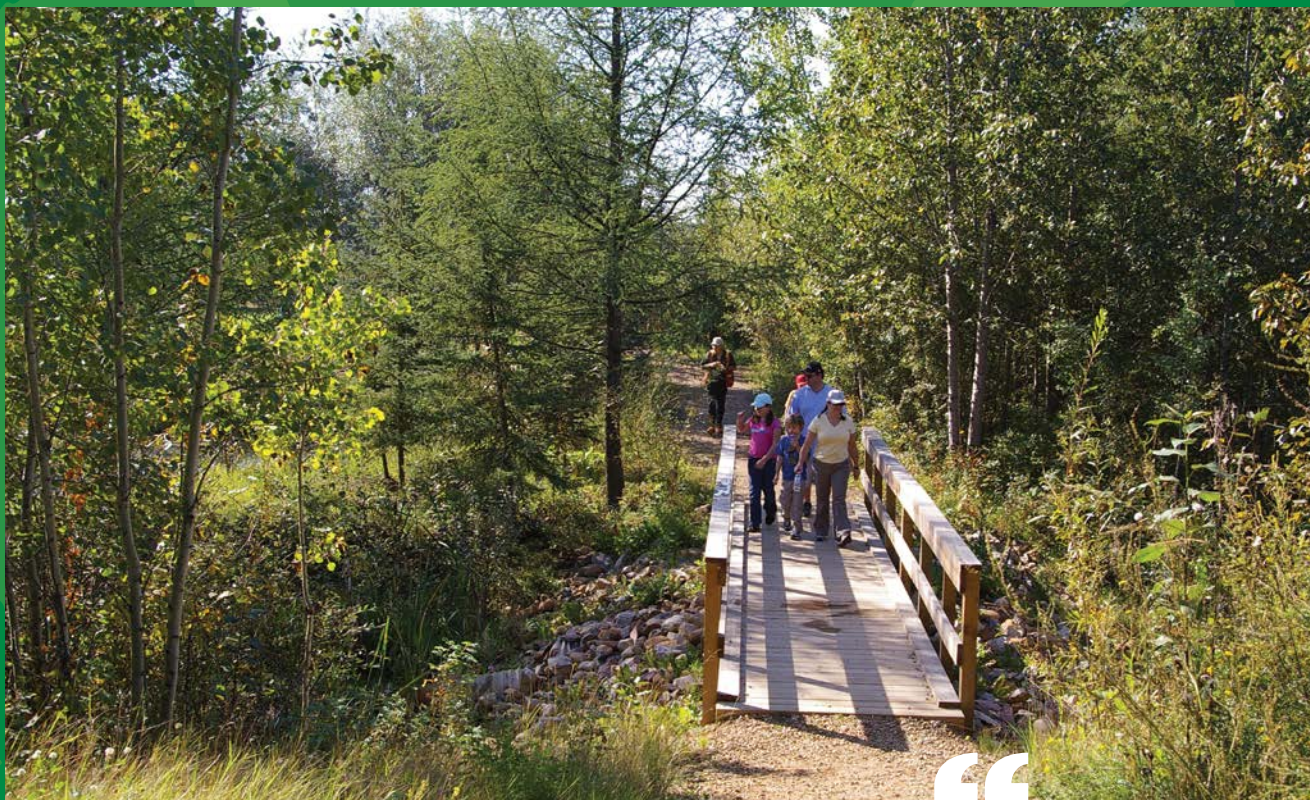
The video garnered wide praise on social media networks with LinkedIn



Beaver lodges along the shore of a wetland in the reclaimed South Bison Hills. Photo is a screen shot from an aerial drone video. To see more visit www.youtube.com/user/SyncrudeCanada

member Abukar Ibrahim writing, "Syncrude is setting the blueprint for other mining companies to follow. Kudos for the amazing work showing the world that mining & environmental conservation can be achieved simultaneously."

To view the video, as well as more footage of Syncrude's reclaimed areas, visit www.youtube.com/user/SyncrudeCanada



Tenth Anniversary of Gateway Hill's Certification

Gateway Hill, a 104-hectare patch of rolling boreal forest stands alone, figuratively and literally. The former overburden placement area sits between the northbound and southbound lanes of Highway 63, south of the Syncrude plant site. It also remains the only certified reclaimed land in the oil sands. While Syncrude marks the 10th anniversary of the Alberta government certifying Gateway Hill as the first reclaimed land in the oil sands, company vice president of mining and extraction Greg Fuhr is firmly focused on the future.

"We are proud to see Gateway Hill certified. It's a symbol of our ongoing commitment to responsible development because we realize we need to be able to reclaim the land we disturb," he says.

Gateway Hill received the first government reclamation certification in the oil sands in 2008.

The public is already starting to see more visible reclamation in Syncrude's former East Mine. This area is already home to the 57-hectare Sandhill Fen watershed that researches wetlands reclamation. The project started in 2009 and scientists from several universities study water, wetland and upland plants, the weather and the soil. As well, reclamation is underway just east of the fen area on the 85-hectare Kingfisher, which will combine both upland forest and lowlands. Syncrude will also continue to monitor areas of mature reclamation, such as South Bison Hills.

“

It's a symbol of our ongoing commitment to responsible development.”



Celebrating **OUR PEOPLE**

Syncrude's greatest resource is our employees.

Today, over 10 per cent of our workforce is of First Nations, Métis or Inuit descent. Here, we recognize their contributions and applaud those who reached service milestones between October 2017 and October 2018. Thank you for making a career with Syncrude!

5 YEARS

Melanie Biduke
Mylene Charbonneau
Charles A. Courtoreille
Nelson Dawe
Jordon DeSequin
Shaun Ferguson
Lukas M. Forbister
Jonathan Hansen
Natasha Hicks
Mark D. Hobbs
Sheldon Hynes
Alexander J. Jani
Kyle Kendall
Lisa Nelson
Kelsey Piercey
Jody Stewart
Cory Struck
Bruce Thevarge
Tracy Tricoteux
Allan Waldner
Adam White
Matthew Woodford

10 YEARS

Chantelle Benoit
Tenille Bjerland
Eric G. Boone
Wallace Campbell
Michael Cardinal
Liam Carson
Steve Champagne
Jason Charette
John Ciupa
Craig Courchene
Rene Courtoreille
Ryland Coventry
Grant Curnew
Duane Davidson
Scottie Drew
Todd Fleming
Dwayne Flett
Sallie Gladue
Roxanne Goodwin
Mark Grinder
Amanda Hunter
Oliver Janvier
Patrick W. Kachur
Christina Laboucane
Marty Lands
Trista Luscombe
Geniveve Manuel
Ryan Owen Marten
Renie D. Muise
Floyd A. Oppenheimer
Priscilla Snook
Chris Steedman

Retirement Congratulations

Timothy G. Flett • Ennis Gladue
Timothy Humphrey • Lyle Huppie
Vickey Prevost • David Tourangeau
Herman D. Tremblay

15 YEARS

Thomas Flett
Kevin McDougall
Jody Simpson
Richard Tuccaro
John Wylie

20 YEARS

Michelle Cormier
Dwayne Flett
Allen Hansen
Grant Hundseth
Micheal Martin
Jason McKenzie
Wayne Noskiye
Blair Thompson

25 YEARS
Veronica A. Chartier
Leonard Grant
Richard D. Houle
Roland McKay
Charles Tremblay
Lawrence J. Whiteknife

30 YEARS

Ron Foy
Lorne Gallagher
Elizabeth Grandjambe
Loretta Mercredi
Howard V. Plante
Valdon Prodaniuk
Aaron L. Whitford

35 YEARS
Brant C. Sneddon
Dawn L. Sneddon
Todd Sneddon

ABORIGINAL RELATIONS SCORECARD



SYNCRUDE DIRECT WORKFORCE

Total Aboriginal Employees (#)
2017

481

2013	2014	2015	2016
467	464	461	470

ABORIGINAL REPRESENTATION IN:

Permanent Syncrude Workforce (%)
2017

10.1

2013	2014	2015	2016
8.8	8.9	9.4	9.8

Leaders and Management (%)
2017

6.8

2013	2014	2015	2016
6.2	5.8	6.1	7.3

Administrative, Professional,
Technical (%) 2017

6.9

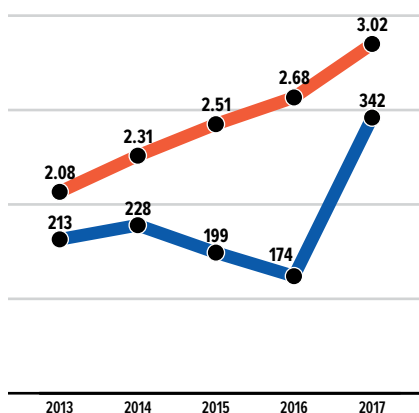
2013	2014	2015	2016
6.0	6.2	6.5	6.7

In 2017, Aboriginal representation in Syncrude's direct workforce reached one of its highest levels ever.

Business

Spending with
Aboriginal Companies

■ \$ millions annually
■ \$ billions cumulative

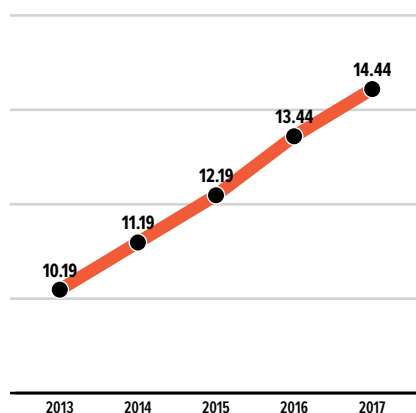


Total Aboriginal business spending for 2017 was a record \$342 million, representing 10 per cent of our total annual procurement. The cumulative total for Syncrude business with First Nations- and Métis-owned companies is over \$3 billion.

Community

Investing in Aboriginal Communities

\$ millions, cumulative since 2001

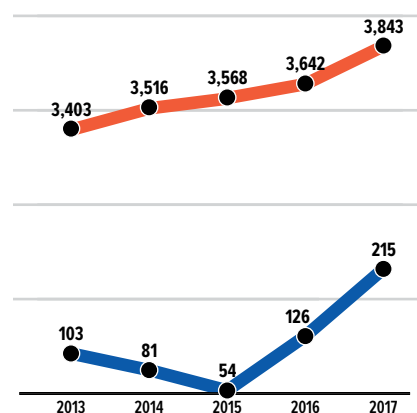


Syncrude invested over \$1 million in Aboriginal initiatives and projects during 2017.

Environment

Permanent Land Reclaimed

■ hectares per year
■ hectares cumulative



Syncrude has permanently reclaimed over 3,800 hectares to date. Another 700 hectares are ready for revegetation.



RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Trades and Operators (%)
2017

12.7

2013	2014	2015	2016
10.6	11.1	11.9	12.3

New Hires (% of all hires)
2017

10.6

2013	2014	2015	2016
6.3	11.6	14.7	19.1

Attrition Rate (%)
2017

4.4

2013	2014	2015	2016
8.2	6.0	6.0	6.2

Average Years of Service
(# of years) 2017

12.9

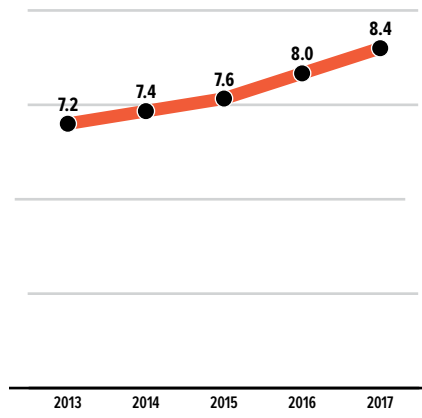
2013	2014	2015	2016
10.7	10.7	12.3	12.2

Syncrude has planted over eight million trees and shrubs on reclaimed land.

Environment

Trees and Shrubs Planted

millions, cumulative

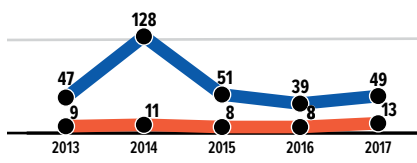


In 2017, over 400,000 seedlings were planted, including seven species of trees and eight species of shrubs.

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 32 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?

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



SYNCRUDE'S ABORIGINAL RELATIONS STEERING COMMITTEE

(left to right) Ken Bell, Isabelle Shelvey, Lana Hill, Greg Fuhr, Doreen Cole, Kara Flynn, Peter Read, Doug Webb, Dr. Christine Kennedy, Jennifer Gagnon.

Missing: Colleen Legdon, Chaim Lum, Michelle Velez.



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 local communities 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 public confidence

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 communities. A Community Relations team supports the Committee; they manage the day-to-day interactions and relationships with local communities of interest.

THE STEERING COMMITTEE

Doreen Cole
Managing Director

Kara Flynn
Vice President, Government & Public Affairs

Greg Fuhr
Vice President, Production, Mining and Extraction

Dr. Christine Kennedy
Chief Medical Officer

Peter Read
Vice President, Strategic Planning

Ken Bell
Manager, Tailings & Lease Development

Jennifer Gagnon
Manager, Talent & Development

Colleen Legdon
Manager, Community Relations

Chaim Lum
Manager, Procurement

Isabelle Shelvey
Manager, Regulatory Affairs

Michelle Velez
Manager, Environmental Affairs

Lana Hill
Advisor, Community Relations

Doug Webb
Aboriginal Business Liaison

MEET OUR COMMUNITY RELATIONS TEAM



A



B



C



E



F



H



A Colleen Legdon
Manager of Community Relations

B Mel Boostrom
Community Relations Specialist

C Lori Cyprien
Community Relations Advisor

D Lana Hill
Community Relations Advisor

E Jo Anne Hulan
Community Investment Representative

F Lisa Nelson
Community Relations Representative

G Tracey Stephen
Community Relations Advisor

H Doug Webb
Aboriginal Business Liaison

Tracy Tricoteux
Aboriginal Recruitment Advisor
(Not Pictured)

THOUGHTS FROM SYNCRUDE'S MANAGING DIRECTOR



Doreen Cole speaks at the Birch River Wildland Park announcement on May 15th, 2018. Syncrude, together with the governments of Alberta and Canada, the Tallcree First Nation, and the Nature Conservancy of Canada partnered towards the creation of the largest boreal conservation area in the world.

Holmes and Watson. Lennon and McCartney. Hewlett and Packard. History is rich with examples of great partnerships. Indeed, teamwork has resulted in some of civilization's most incredible achievements. As you'll read throughout this year's edition of *Pathways*, Syncrude too understands the value of collaboration and the importance of working together to create opportunity.

In these pages, you'll learn about one of our most valued partnerships with the Fort McKay First Nation on the Beaver Creek Wood Bison Ranch. This ranch, established 25 years ago, started with the simple premise of demonstrating reclamation effectiveness. Having since proven successful, the mandate today has expanded to incorporate aspects of species conservation and the preservation of Indigenous knowledge and traditions. We also explore the history of bison in North America, their connection to Indigenous peoples and the successful efforts to bring this majestic species back from the brink of extinction.

Syncrude is also proud to work with the educational sector, helping remove obstacles for youth to pursue their dream careers. You'll read about students like Maria Golosky, Melissa Bidniak and Shaye Anne Pierson, who are just a few of those benefitting from our scholarship support. I know you'll agree they all have exceptionally promising futures.

Teamwork is also an important aspect of our commitment to local Aboriginal businesses with whom we spent a record \$342 million in 2017 and a cumulative \$3 billion since 1992. Championing their success has also enabled these companies to invest in their own communities. This includes providing fantastic careers for people like Chance Hamelin, an apprentice crane operator who is benefitting from the joint venture formed by Fort McMurray #468 First Nation's Christina River Enterprises and Northern Crane Services Group. In addition, Syncrude is among a group of top companies advocating for increased economic opportunities for Aboriginal business through the *Supply Change* initiative of the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB).

Collaboration and genuine relationships are fundamental to the well-being of our society and country. As we journey together on the path toward reconciliation with Canada's Indigenous peoples, I hope *Pathways* can provide meaningful insight into the depth of Syncrude's commitment and our contributions towards achieving that important goal.

Doreen Cole

Managing Director



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



Conservation herd, Saskatchewan.



Syncrude

www.syncrude.ca

The Syncrude Project is a joint venture undertaking among Imperial Oil Resources Limited; Nexen Oil Sands Partnership; Sinopec Oil Sands Partnership; and Suncor Energy Inc. (with the Suncor interest held by Canadian Oil Sands Partnership #1 and Suncor Energy Ventures Partnership, both wholly owned affiliates of Suncor Energy Inc.), as the project owners, and Syncrude as the project operator.



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