

# AITSINIKI

June 2025 • litawakokatsupi



**RETURNING  
THE SACRED**

**SIKSIKA  
ROYALTY**

**ELDERS  
WEEK**

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## WELCOME

Oki and welcome to this month's issue of Aitsiniki

We are honoured to continue sharing the stories, voices, and perspectives of Siksika Nation and the broader Blackfoot Confederacy. Whether you're a returning reader or joining us for the first time, we thank you for taking the time to explore our stories and celebrate our people.

We are proud to feature a powerful image of Elder Darryl Breaker on this month's cover, captured by the talented Andrew Breaker. His work continues to reflect the strength and spirit of our Nation, and we're grateful to showcase his vision through this issue's front page.

Looking ahead, we're excited to announce that graduation photos will be featured in our July issue. If you

or someone you know is graduating, be sure to stay connected with us for details on how to be included. This upcoming edition will highlight the incredible achievements of our youth and the communities who support them.

We also have ongoing updates on the site at Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park, a place of deep cultural significance. Stay tuned as we continue to share stories and developments around this sacred site and the important work being done to honour and protect it.

As always, we remain committed to uplifting community voices, preserving Blackfoot culture, and creating a space where our stories can thrive.

Thank you for reading, and welcome to Aitsiniki.

# SIKSIKA NATION NEWS

## Blackfoot Confederacy Symposium

By Jasmine Majoros

The Blackfoot Confederacy Indigenous Learning & Child Care Symposium took place Thursday and Friday May 22-23, 2025. This symposium brought together the Blackfoot communities of Siksika, Kainai-Blood, Piikani and Amskapi Piikuni to take part in this gathering that represents a collective commitment to enhancing our indigenous-led approaches with early childcare and development. Participants had the opportunity to hear and learn from keynote speakers such as Wilton Good Striker, Dr. Deborah Pace (PhD, RPsych), Dr. Gabrielle Weasel Head (PhD), Jenna Marr, Miranda Bernard and Mariah Gladstone. Also, the four Chiefs Traveller Plaited Hair from Kainai-Blood Tribe, Troy Knowlton from Piikani Nation, Ouray Crowfoot from Siksika Nation and Rodney Gervais from Amskapi Piikuni. This was a great opportunity for the participants to learn strategies in childrearing through Blackfoot traditions, language and culture, together Nations can use these early frameworks to build, strengthen and shape the future of our communities.



## Chief & Council Open House

On May 28, 2025, at the Piiksapi Memorial Arbour, Siksika Nation's Chief & Council hosted an Open House, welcoming Nation members to connect, ask questions, and receive updates on programs,

services, and departments. The event featured booths from various departments including Siksika Membership, Siksika Health Services, BCHP, and more – each sharing valuable info and resources with the community.

The Open House provided an opportunity for information sharing and community engagement.



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# Strathmore High School Honors Graduates With Pow Wow

By Lexington Many Heads

What an unforgettable evening celebrating our 2025 graduates with culture, community, and pride at the Strathmore High School Grad Powwow!

The evening began with a powerful Grand Entry, followed by a heartfelt prayer from Elder Vincent Yel-lowOldWoman. We opened the floor with a couple of vibrant inter-tribals before the traditional dances began across all categories—from Tiny Tots to Golden Age, including girls, boys, women's, and men's categories.

Dancers lit up the arbor in a beautiful display of styles: Fancy, Traditional, Jingle, Grass, Chicken, and Prairie Chicken. Every dancer brought their spirit, energy, and tradition to life—truly a sight to behold! The grad powwow wrapped up with a joyful round dance and the retiring of the flags.

Congratulations to the Strathmore



High School Class of 2025—your journey is just beginning, and we're so proud of you all!

A large advertisement for BAAC Construction Inc. The background is a photograph of a yellow CAT 140M AWD wheel loader. Overlaid on the image is a blue semi-transparent box containing the following text:

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# Across the World

By Lexington Many Heads

On May 28, 2025, a Siksika Nation youth member, Maddison White, completed her 3-month role as a virtual intern with VIDEA, an international development organization based in Victoria, British Columbia. Maddison White is a student at Mount Royal University and is in her second year in the Early Learning & Child Care program, and her internship journey first started in 2021. At that time, she was interning, through VIDEA, with their partner organization in Zambia called 'Women For Change', an organization that advocates for rural communities, especially women and girls, to achieve sustainable human development. Maddison enjoyed it so much that she reached out again to join a new virtual cohort set to begin in March of 2025. VIDEA, a localized and international organization rooted in Latin America, has been running for 46 years, and when they first began, they partnered with the Indigenous Peoples and people around America that were involved in the labour movement. Although they are still an international development organization, they predominately work in the Global South, the African continent, on a number of localized and internship projects. Rachel Barr, the Head of Youth Opportunities at VIDEA, says, "In good practice in International Development, in order to work in places that are not your home, you should also be striving to work on those issues in your home as well – issues around climate change and gender and governance – so, we work on Turtle Island as well." VIDEA has a number of local

projects. For example, a climate project that works with people from Cree & Métis territory who are working along the river bend to make sure fish have good environments to live and eat in. VIDEA also delivers the Indigenous Youth Internship Program, available to Indigenous youth aged 18–30 and those who want to participate in a learning exchange program either virtually or in person. Rachel explains that a virtual option is great for people who have family commitments, mental health struggles that will impact them if they leave their community, or school commitments. "It's a safer space and works for a lot of people, and you get to take a look at and learn about a different culture, organization, and community through a virtual space." VIDEA also offers in-person internships, and they strongly encourage Indigenous youth that may not have had a lot of opportunities offered to them, from rural communities, northern communities, or who struggle with their mental health, to apply. "We want to see those people apply. Sometimes in programs we see people that are classically successful – they have a degree, or get really good grades – and of course, we want to see those people apply too, but we really want to see people who have faced a lot of barriers to get to the place they're in. We love to see applications like that," Rachel Barr says. VIDEA recognizes that "there are a million opportunities for the people who get A+ in all their classes," so this program is uniquely and amazingly different because they want this opportunity to also be for

those who either struggle to fit into community, need this to gain independence, or have struggled with mental health, and this is something incredibly brave for them to do. "There are always opportunities after the internship to join VIDEA too – there are about 70 staff and 70% were originally interns!" Barr shares. Zeva Rushforth, a coordinator for the project 'Sharing Our Power' and the leader of the wellness program for IYIP, was an intern too and became a member of the VIDEA staff after telling Lynn Thornton, VIDEA's Executive Director, that she would love to continue to work with VIDEA. Rushforth shared about the internship, "It made me grow a lot as a person – it taught me money management, how to save and properly take care of myself, and improve my eating habits – they might sound small, but they affected me in a really big way. Connecting with VIDEA and getting the opportunity to work with VIDEA has made a crazy difference in my life – it set me up, and I've been able to grow a lot from the support." After interviewing for a project and doing a briefing, Rachel asked Zeva to join the IYIP team as well, and she then became the host for the March 2025 virtual cohort that Maddison White joined. "It was cool but also an adjustment because I'm not used to being a leader, and I felt a little bit out of place, but it was a really cool opportunity," Zeva shares. In an interview with Maddison White, she discusses her experience in taking the opportunity again to attend the virtual internship.

## A SIKSIKA YOUTH MEMBER COMPLETES AN OVERSEAS INTERNSHIP FROM HOME

### Q: What was the internship like?

**Maddison:** I found it quite interesting that we were granted the opportunity to work with the Indigenous Peoples of Uganda. As interns, we were taught so much about the intricate lives of people on the other side of the world and the vast contrast of how our everyday lives vary from one another. It was an eye-opening experience that broadened my sense of gratitude for the knowledge we gained, friendships made along the way, and the work VIDEA does with Uganda and Zambia.

### Q: Were there any similarities or differences between the first time and the second time you joined the internship?

**Maddison:** The only differences would be who our team intern leader was, the different Ugandan people we were fortunate enough to learn from, and, of course, the team we were interning with. This time, we were interning with an organization in Uganda named Angel's, who works with children with disabilities and special needs by fostering their educational growth with compassion, respect, and integrity.

### Q: What did a typical day look like?

**Maddison:** We would usually have our first team meeting at 8 a.m., which would last for 1 hour via

Zoom. Then, we'd have a Zambian language lesson with Bertha Mukonda, VIDEA's Inclusion Manager, that would go for another hour, then we'd be off for the remainder of the day. Most days would start at 8 a.m. with Indigenous youth across Canada, so the time difference would play a major part in whether an intern starts at 6 a.m. or not – Siksika was on the safer side, as we fortunately had an 8 a.m. start. Overall, we'd usually have around 3-4 meetings per day with breaks in between.

### Q: Lastly, what encouragement would you give youth to take part in this internship?

**Maddison:** I would say go for it! Working from home was a definite bonus! You are also granted a certificate once completed! This internship is great for youth furthering their educational journey themselves and would love to learn more about core issues in international development.

Rachel and Zeva also shared some words of encouragement:

**Rachel:** "Do the scary things and apply. When you go to apply somewhere, you haven't signed your life away. Ask the questions, get on an interview, see if it's for you. I strongly encourage folks to apply, have a conversation with us, and if it ends up that the timing isn't right, you

didn't waste anyone's time. Write the application!"

**Zeva:** Go for it! You don't know how much you can grow until you take these opportunities. The internship program can offer so much, in so many ways, for so many different individuals. I feel like you can really grow just by taking those different opportunities and taking a chance and trying something new. Sometimes, something that you could be scared of could be the thing that changes your life."

The internship concluded with a two-day Youth Inclusion Conference based in Uganda, with Maddison and her fellow interns attending virtually. The conference featured discussions, panels, and team-building games from Ugandan knowledge keepers and those with personal narratives about the topic of intellectual and physical disabilities. It was a great way to end the interns' three-month learning journey and was an experience that Maddison will never forget.

The IYIP program, delivered by VIDEA, has applications that are open year-round, and depending on when you apply, you could be joining a September or a March cohort. Apply and take the opportunity of a lifetime: <https://videa.ca/indigenous-internships/>



# Siksika Nation

Photos by Jasmine Majoros

**C**ongratulations to the incoming Siksika Nation Royalty. The pageant, held on June 5th, crowned four new princesses:

**Tiny Tot Princess Ariya Red Old Man**

**Miss Kookona Brealeigh Calf**

**Miss Teen Siksika  
Destyn Wolf Child**

**Miss Siksika Trinity Pretty Young-  
man**

Much appreciation to the outgoing Royalty

**Tiny Tot Kyra Calf Robe-Solway**

**Miss Kookona Aubree Daniels**

**Miss Teen Siksika Klynn First Rider**

**Miss Siksika Sanita Bear Chief -  
Medicine Shield**

for your work representing the Nation over the last year, and many thanks to this year's contestants, for coming out to showcase your talents and dedication to your community.



# Princess Pageant





Story and photos by Mase Crowchief

**T**he month of June coincides with Kaah'sinooniiks (Siksika Elders) Week, and this year, 2025, marks the 40th anniversary of the Elders Lodge, now a department of Siksika Health Services, since its grand opening in 1985. This year's Elders Week is a truly special one. Activities for Kaah'sinooniiks Week included a grand entry, a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Elders bus, a tea and gathering to discuss community needs for elders, and an adventure day at Grey Eagle Casino. Kory Duck Chief, "Anaatsiikanasoyaki," meaning Bright Shining Woman, has been the current Elders Lodge Team Lead since 2015, marking her 10th year at the lodge this year as well. Kory explained how she received her Blackfoot name: she was always with her grandmother Emily Duck Chief, and when elders would

come to visit Emily, Kory—at just 4 years old—would greet them, show them where to sit, and serve them a cup of tea. The late Francis Black, Eebii moohgoo mii, Siksika Traditional Medicine Man, was amazed by her kind and truly important actions and decided to honor her with that traditional name.

Over the years, Kory embarked on an intensive review and created a chronological report to help her better understand the Elders Lodge, its residents, and its staff. "I needed to get to know the facility, I needed to get to know the staff. I needed to get to know what the needs were here, going forward. And also, of course, what the risks were, what was needed to mitigate those risks, and what the liabilities were in place," Kory Duck Chief said. Before

her time, the budget for the Elders Lodge was in a structural deficit. Expenses were going up, but the budget stayed the same—which, Kory explained, can be frustrating because you need the proper budget to support an integral building like the lodge: a 24/7 continuing care facility with close to 19 residents. There was a lot of advocating that was done and continues today.

In the late 70s, before the Elders Lodge was built, discussions of advocacy began within elders' homes at their kitchen tables to support the idea of a lodge. Among those advocates were community members like Emily Duck Chief (first woman elected as Siksika Councillor), traditional medicine man Francis Black, Sister Celine, Rachel Redgun, the late Rosalynn Breaker, Rupert Bull-

# ELDERS LODGE MARKS 40<sup>TH</sup> YEAR OF SERVING SIKSIKA

**“WE ALWAYS HAVE OUR  
DOORS OPEN BECAUSE  
WE WANT TO BE ABLE  
TO SUPPORT OUR OWN  
SIKSIKA MEMBERS”**

bear, Nora Fry, Marlene Solway, Carmen Redgun, Darlene Yellow Old Woman, and many others from Family Services, Chief and Council at the time. These groups helped move the idea forward through letter-writing to the then Prime Minister of Canada, and eventually secured funding through the province's Heritage Trust Fund to have it built. We want to apologize for anyone we may have missed who helped make the lodge a reality—every effort at the time was truly important.

Only two handicap suites were built at the start, but rooms have since been retrofitted to make them more accessible and provide greater independence for residents. Over the years, former team leaders—originally called directors—built a relationship with then Old Sun

College and Bow Valley College to train staff to provide resident care support and become the 1st personal care attendants in Siksika. More staff became health care aides and obtained other health care certifications. The lodge was also chosen across Canada to participate in a Supportive Care Assistant Program, where seven staff entered and five completed their micro-certifications.

Going forward, the Elders Lodge has been approved through the province for a 34-bed continuing care facility with long-term and memory care units for elders. This facility will be available to those 18 years and older and will have the safe support area for elders with Alzheimer's or dementia. The lodge is also pursuing partnerships to help address memory care loss.

Since 2009, the Elders Lodge, under Siksika Health Services, has maintained accreditation through Accreditation Canada, and is committed to preserving its Exemplary Care Status designation, the highest level of recognition available through the accrediting organization. Every four years, Siksika Health Services undergoes comprehensive evaluation by external healthcare professionals to verify compliance with healthcare standards, including resident care services at the Elders Lodge. The organization's next scheduled on-site survey is planned for December of this year.

In 2023, the Lodge and Elders Services made a proposal to Healthy Aging Alberta, via United Way Calgary, for \$175,000. They were so impressed with the proposal and increased the amount to \$200,000, which is how the new Siksika Elders Bus was purchased. Other specialty services include the Elder Abuse Case Worker program, Ears to You - Hearing Health Check Day, and, soon to come for the lodge and recreation, mobile physiotherapy services.

“We want to encourage our youth out there, encourage our people out there. Go get your certification, go get your diplomas, go get your master's degrees. Come back to serve Siksikawa (Siksika People) and share your knowledge learned to benefit our nation. We always have our doors open because we want to be able to support our own Siksika members,” Kory Duck Chief said, highlighting the ongoing need for more staff.

At the Siksika Nation Fair Powwow 2025, they will be hosting an honour dance for this special 40th anniversary year to honour the past and current elders (residents), former team leads, and staff who worked at the lodge to care for the elders. “When you hear that drumbeat, you really can feel that within your heart. And to me, I'd like to say that doing that honour dance is going to strengthen us. It's going to bring the blessings of all the prayers that have been said from year to year, from generations back to our present time, so that we can continue building services that are needed—like the Siksika Elders Lodge,” Kory Duck Chief said.

# CHIEF OLD SUN ENDS THE YEAR IN STYLE WITH A SCHOOL CARNIVAL

By **Marcus Smith**

**O**n June 25th, Chief Old Sun had their year-end Carnival for the students on the last day of school. The school allowed the students to be more free within school grounds, as there were around 15 different stations the school had built for all the kids to try. They had activities such as a bouncy house, face painting, freezies, popcorn, and of course the famous dunk tank, which Carnival Committee member and music teacher Calvin Kother mentioned to be infamous in last year's carnival. The carnival also included a bubble station, chalk drawing, giant Connect Four dots, and giant Tetris. The school also brought in a clown for all the kids' enjoyment and also a magician.

Calvin Kother mentioned the school used to do year-end academic awards for the students, but the school had a vote for all the students to choose between academic awards or the year-end school carnival, in which the students voted for the carnival to celebrate the school year.

Kother mentions the reason why the school chose to do this is because the students deserve it, also saying the students worked hard all year, saying they come to school every day and give it their all, saying they want to celebrate that at the end of the year to give the students a token of thank you for all the hard work that they do every day during the school year.

Kother also says this is to create good memories for the students to carry with them. Kother also says this is to create good memories for the students to carry with them.

As the laughter echoed through the school grounds and students ran from station to station, it was clear the carnival was more than just a fun day—it was a celebration of community, effort, and the joy of learning. For many students, it marked not just the end of a school year, but the beginning of lasting memories they'll take with them for years to come. Here's to another successful school year at Chief Old Sun School!

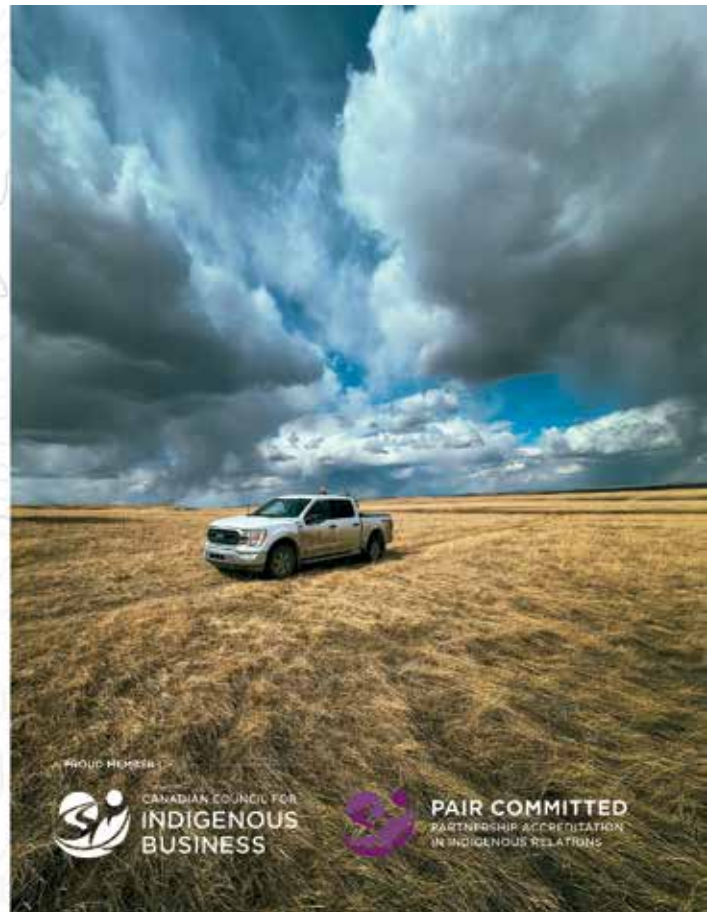


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# CONTINUING THE LEGACY

## SIKSIKA NATION FAIR

By Andrew Breaker

The Siksika Nation Fair has been a part of Siksika's history for many years, dating back to the 1900s. The Fair was held annually in late June or mid-August, which many community members remember as the traditional time of year. The Nation Fair brought together community members, neighbouring Nations, and guests to celebrate our identity through tradition, sport, and family connection.

Today's Fair is a lively, multi-day event filled with various activities for everyone. From the powwow and rodeo action to sports, the music festival, and many more cultural events, the Siksika Nation Fair continues to honour traditions that go back over a century.

The history of the Siksika Nation Fair started in the early 1900s. It was originally organized to highlight the achievements of local farmers and ranchers, and mirrored rural fairs held across the Prairies. Livestock exhibitions and farming competitions were the main features at the time. But the Fair also served a deeper purpose-it became a quiet act of resistance and cultural preservation during a time when Indigenous ceremonies and gatherings were heavily restricted by government policy. The Nation Fair

became one of the few places where Siksika people could safely gather, speak the Blackfoot language, and share traditional knowledge.

Today, the Nation Fair is a four-day celebration that reflects both the history and future of Siksika. Core features include the Annual Siksika Powwow, a gathering of Indigenous people showcasing traditional dancing, drumming, and singing from across the Blackfoot Confederacy and beyond. The Siksika Rodeo is a major draw for both community members and visitors, celebrating the Nation's deep ranching history. The Run as One Music Festival provides a platform where Indigenous and local musicians come together to perform their own original music. Sports tournaments bring athletes from far and wide to showcase their athleticism and compete in the spirit of friendly competition. The Hand Games Tournament has become one of the most popular parts of the weekend, where teams gather to play one of the oldest traditional Indigenous games still thriving today.



All of these core events come together to create a vibrant, family-friendly festival atmosphere. The Nation Fair is more than just an event-it's a space where the past meets the present and new stories and memories are made. It's a time for elders to share wisdom, for youth to shine, and for everyone to reflect on what it means to be Siksika.

As the Nation continues to grow and strengthen, so too does the Fair. It remains a living tradition, passed down through generations, and a powerful reminder of our community's strength, resilience, and unity. We invite all to join in this celebration-to experience the culture, honour the history, and be part of a future rooted in pride and tradition.

# Bringing Them Home

## RIBSTONES REPATRIATED TO SIKSIKA

By Jasmine Majoros

**B**lackfoot Historical Crossing and members of Siksika celebrated the repatriation of a pair of sacred ribstones on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025, after being held for a century in a museum in the National Capital Region. The Ribstones hold a deep significance to the Blackfoot people and were used for meditation and prayer by previous generations. Their return will mark a historical moment in history as the homecoming of great cultural and spiritual importance to the people of Siksika. The story behind their return, along with the importance of its usage and connection to the land and buffalo, will also help in the preserving of Blackfoot culture that can be passed on to future generations.

The century old ribstones were originally removed from Blackfoot territory in the late 1800s and early 1900s. A Blackfoot delegation and Martin Heavy Head travelled to the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, Que., earlier this year to identify the items. They confirmed

that they belonged to the Siksika people, and with the help of the Canadian Heritage Museum ensured their return. The ribstones are just two of many items that were taken from the Blackfoot people or destroyed. But in recent years several other important artifacts have been

central Alberta for many years finally returned home in 2023.

The event at BCHP underlined the importance of the continuing efforts to return Blackfoot artifacts to their origin. The stones were a part of a 25 year program focused on preserv-

ing, reclaiming and sharing sacred Blackfoot artifacts. The Blackfoot First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Regulation was introduced in 2023, which set out a process to repatriate sacred ceremonial objects to the Siksika Nation, Blood Tribe and Piikani Nation.

“I’d have to say that we really relied on our Blackfoot Confederacy neighbours,

we are very thankful to them for identifying the stones as belonging to Siksika. We first heard of these stones a couple years ago but it was a fast process and that shows that there is a lot of partnership. We’re building some good relationships with our museums and that’s kind of what we’re for,” Shannon Bear Chief.



repatriated through this process. Like a headdress that was returned from a museum in England last year, Chief Crowfoots regalia in 2022 after being housed at the Royal Albert memorial museum also in England since 1878, and another sacred stone that sat in a farmer’s field in



By Shilo Clark

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## A GREENER FUTURE TAKES ROOT

### SIKSIKA NATION AND PROJECT FOREST

### WORK TOWARD ONE MILLION TREES

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**A** vision for a greener, more resilient Siksika is well underway thanks to a unique partnership with Project Forest – a non-profit dedicated to restoring local landscapes across Canada.

On June 18, 2025, community members gathered at the Deerfoot Sportsplex, where thousands of free seedlings were handed out as part of the Siksika Nation Community Shelterbelt Program. Families, farmers, and volunteers collected trees that will soon take root around homes, fields, and roads throughout the Nation.

This large-scale tree-planting effort responds to a gap that dates back over a century. While the federal government once supplied prairie farmers with shelterbelt trees to protect crops and homesteads from

harsh winds and weather, many First Nations – including Siksika – were excluded from that support. Now, Siksika is reclaiming and expanding this important natural infrastructure for the benefit of present and future generations.

In May 2024, Project Forest and Siksika crews planted more than 130,000 trees and shrubs, creating nearly 28 kilometers of new shelterbelts in both residential and agricultural areas. These living windbreaks do much more than block gusts – they help clean the air and water, provide safe habitat for wildlife, reduce noise from highways, and offer traditional plants and medicines for community use.

The goal is ambitious: to plant one million trees across the Nation over five years. With continued commu-

nity engagement and the support of local businesses and volunteers, an additional 800,000 seedlings are expected to be planted by 2029.

Project Forest's mission is rooted in bringing forests closer to where people live, work, and play, while helping to fight climate change naturally. For Siksika, the Shelterbelt Program is more than just planting trees – it's about restoring balance to the land, improving food security, creating privacy, and passing down healthier landscapes to the next generation.

As more seedlings find homes in Siksika's soil, each one represents a small step toward a greener, stronger future – rooted in community, tradition, and the resilience of the land.

# SIKSIKA SUPPORT CENTRE CELEBRATES THEIR GRADUATES' ACHIEVEMENTS

By Tyrone Sitting Eagle

On May 29, 2025, the Siksika Support Centre held a graduation ceremony to honour the accomplishments of participants in the Siksika Support Centre Healing Program. This transformative initiative was made possible through the dedication of Healing Support Program Supervisor Evans Yellow Old Woman, Intake Assessors Krista Johnson and Laura Maguire, Outreach Worker Leandra Water Chief, and in partnership with Simonne Backfat from the Siksika Justice Department.

Graduates recognized for successfully completing the Healing Plan Program included: Drew Robinson, Joseph Medicine Shield, Codi Big Old Man, Joey Good Eagle, Kayla Bigsnake, Trayse Crow Chief, and Paul Black.

The Healing Program was launched three years ago, developed by the original intake assessors at the Siksika Support Centre. It was designed as a community-driven approach to healing, where clients take the lead in shaping their personal recovery journey. Evans Yellow Old

Woman emphasized this client-first philosophy during an interview with Siksika Media: "As soon as the clients walk through the door, we acknowledge that this is client-driven. They are in the driver's seat and we are in the passenger seat," said Evans. This model of care ensures that each client builds their own healing plan, while support staff walk beside them through challenges they may face—including navigating the justice system, education, employment, and addiction recovery. Intake assessors and support workers remain actively involved, offering not only guidance but also advocacy and encouragement throughout the process. Clients also receive additional support through financial aid and food assistance. In the early stages of the program, while the vision was clear, navigating how to bring it to life presented challenges. Drew Robinson, the program's very first participant, helped pave the way. His commitment and initiative not only proved the program's success but also inspired others. By creating his own healing plan and following it with



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determination, Drew brought the team's vision into reality. Today, he stands as a powerful advocate for recovery and a respected role model within the community—playing a pivotal role in the development and ongoing success of the Siksika Support Centre Healing Program.

The Siksika Support Centre Healing Program stands as a testament to the power of community-led healing and the strength of individuals who choose to reclaim their paths. As more participants continue to embark on their own journeys, the program remains a vital source of support, guidance, and hope. With

the dedication of its staff and the courage of those who walk through its doors, the Healing Program continues to grow—creating lasting impact for individuals, families, and the Siksika Nation as a whole.

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# KIMMAPIITS KNOWING Y

By Lexxington Many Heads

**W**hat started as a one-session presentation to address bullying, then turned into a 3-session workshop taking place over the course of 3 months where participants experienced meaningful connection, collaboration and traditional teachings. Joni Breaker, the mental health coordinator at Old Sun Community College (OSCC), says, “These incidents were discouraging students from coming back and we knew it had to be addressed.” So, Joni, Lorelee Water Chief, the Post-Secondary Career Guidance Counsellor, and Tiffany Crow Chief, the Mental Health Assistant, brainstormed and put together the “OSCC Mental Health Initiative: Kimmapiitsinni” which featured special talks from Elders Darrell Breaker and Leanne Sleigh – knowledge keepers and members of societies – group work, and more. It was a way to address bullying and lateral violence in shared spaces, to share with attendants to be mindful,

caring, and respectful of one another – as taught in our grandfather teachings – and to remind folks to practice our Blackfoot ways. These teachings are something that the OSCC wants to spread amongst the college with a goal to make known that OSCC is a safe place for all. The workshop sessions concluded on May 27th, 2025.

The first session of the Kimmapiitsinni workshops started on March 18, 2025 at the Old Sun Community College with guest speakers Darrell Breaker and Leanne Sleigh. Both elders shared from their point of view of our Blackfoot ways and how to integrate the grandfather teachings into our daily lives. The 7 grandfather teachings include: respect, humility, love, truth, honesty, wisdom, and courage, and are core values that act as a foundation on how to treat others and to foster harmony within ourselves. “Caring is in our blood,” Joni says as she

explains that historically, Blackfoot people were welcoming and caring people, but as a result of intergenerational trauma, a new generation of parents and kids, unfortunately, don’t know the Blackfoot traditional ways that teach us about respecting other’s and one’s self, or at least not very many do. “Everyone can be bullied or be bullies [and] it can have concerning affects on mental health,” Joni says. Her and her colleagues put on this workshop together in the hope that “our people learn or are reminded to respect each other, as our ways teaches us.” Darrell and Leanne shared powerful knowledge for those in attendance to take home, but time ran out and Joni, Lorelee, and Tiffany noticed that more topics needed to be addressed. So, they planned for a second workshop.

On April 1, 2025, a second session of the Kimmapiitsinni workshop commenced. This second workshop included group work amongst

# MINNI: YOUR SPIRIT



the students followed by a short presentation on their group work. The group work included students coming together to write out a list of scenarios that relates to one of the grandfather teachings. For example, a group of students were given the grandfather teaching 'courage' to write about. On poster board, the students wrote out things that it takes courage to do: to show up to school everyday; to socialize; to be yourself. Not only was this a beautiful engaging way for students to practice relationship building and connection skills, but it also was a fun way of teaching, through teamwork, which allows the students to really absorb the knowledge being shared. During the second session, they also went over lateral violence and preparing those in attendance about when and how to recognize it in a work place - or any shared space. Lateral violence is a form of bullying, but distinctly, it happens in marginalized communities or between members of the same group

such as in workplaces, schools, families, and communities, to name a few. Oftentimes, it stems from anger or negative feelings from home and is brought to the workplace where that person then takes it out on their peers, for example. It can come in many forms, such as gossiping or, a well-known one, teasing. Teasing is something that is very prominent in Indigenous communities and it comes off as humour, an outlet many use to cope, but most don't realize the affects teasing can have on others. That's why Joni, Tiffany, and Lorelee wanted to include lateral violence as an additional topic during the second Kimmapiitsinni sessions - so that the students know what it is, to prepare them if they ever come across it, and to be careful with what they say. The second session was an engaging, uplifting, and knowledge-filled day but they needed one more day to close out the workshops.

So, then came along the third and

final Kimmapiitsinni workshop session where the mental health team at OSCC invited back elders Darrell Breaker and Leanne Sleight to continue to share their knowledge and experiences. They reminded and encouraged the participants to come back to the Blackfoot ways of life and to instill these teachings in their minds. It was a great way to close out the sessions and to leave the participants with lasting knowledge, experiences, and everything in between, to bring home with them and hold on to for a lifetime. In completing the workshop sessions, participants will also receive a completion certificate on OSCC's Awards day. The Mental Health team at Old Sun Community College hopes to make this an annual event, and would like to leave you with a heartfelt message: Be compassionate to others, and continue to learn our Blackfoot ways.



# people, place





photos by Siksika Media

# es and faces





## SMALL BUSINESS PROFILE

By Mase Crowchief

In 2024, Delanie Righthand began her home-based business journey with her lash salon called Dee's Lashes, located right here on Siksika Nation. Inspired by TikToks of people doing lashes, she decided to use the last of her distro on lash courses when her maternity leave ended. She obtained her certification in November 2023 and began taking clients in April 2024. From then on, she started doing lashes from her bed and still has loyal clients from before the salon was built.

"I think this is important to me because I believe people need self-care, and this is a form of self-care for women that need it. Some people don't get access to do stuff like this, so I offer services for women that just want to try it out. It's really important to me because I started this—I did this. Me and my husband did this. We started from nothing. The basement was nothing, and now it's a lash salon," Delanie Righthand says.

She also explains that she wanted to have a salon on the reserve that was affordable and close. As a mother herself, she thought it would be easier for moms to travel to her home. Dee's Lashes offers services including classic, volume, hybrid, and mega volume lash extensions, along with eyebrow services such as tint and lamination. The salon also features music and snacks to create a welcoming environment for anyone wanting to practice self-care. When you make the time to take care of yourself, you start to see yourself the way others do—beautiful inside and out.

"I just wanna show people that you can do it—even if it's out of your home. You can start your own little business. I'm only three months postpartum—I just had my son three months ago. And coming into business is easy and hard. I'd like to say thank you to anyone that has supported me, continues to support me, and will further support me,"

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**I BELIEVE PEOPLE NEED SELF-CARE, AND THIS IS A FORM OF SELF-CARE FOR WOMEN THAT NEED IT**

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Delanie Righthand says.

As for the future of Dee's Lashes, she hopes to gain more certifications in the beauty world, such as teeth whitening, tooth gems, and spray tanning. However, she always keeps in mind what the Nation would like to have and see. For now, lashes will remain the main focus as Delanie navigates both motherhood and her business, Dee's Lashes.

Check out her socials on Facebook and Instagram to book an appointment at Dee's Lashes. Thank you!

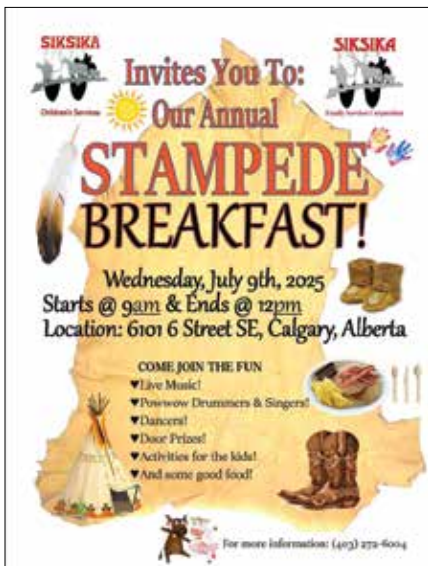
# CLASSIFIEDS

**Fresh Routes market**  
 Every Tuesday 12.00 - 2.00 PM  
 Fresh, healthy and affordable fruits and vegetables and other grocery items  
 For more information: [freshroutes.ca](http://freshroutes.ca)

**Training Opportunity**  
 Siksika Employment and Training Services is seeking individuals interesting in Security Guard training.  
 Contact: 403.734.5136  
 Samantha Wolf Child  
 825.733.7265  
 or Jeffrey Water Chief  
 403.404.4389

**Anxiety Management Support Group**  
 Every Tuesday 5.00 PM - 6.00 PM  
 Health & Wellness Service Area  
 Deerfoot Sportsplex  
 A welcoming space for anyone wanting to learn practical skills for handling anxiety. Come join us in a supportive environment where you can learn, share, and grow together.  
 No registration required - just drop in!  
 Everyone welcome.

**Siksika Addictions Program**  
 NA Meeting  
 Thursdays from 7.00 PM to 8.00 PM  
 Siksika Health & Wellness Centre  
 Contact: 403.734.5687



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Texas Scramble \$800 per team  
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Contact: Erwin Bear Chief at [erwin.bc@oldsuncollege.ca](mailto:erwin.bc@oldsuncollege.ca)

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**SIKSIKA NATION, CANADA**  
 GUEST MINISTRIES

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 DAYSTAR MINISTRIES GEORGE & PAULINE GUNNER  
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 PAULA STACY GEORGE

"Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord."  
 Psalm 31:24

7:30 Nightly

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