

AITSINIKI

August 2025 • litapohkyakiupi



**RUN
AS
ONE**

**ROCKIN'
THE
REZ**

**AIG
RESULTS**



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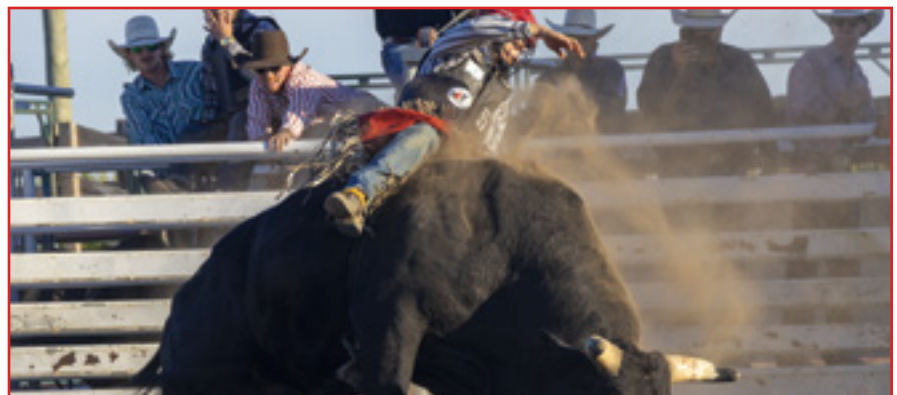
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WELCOME

Oki, and thanks for picking up a copy of Aitsiniki. This month, we've got a wrap up on the summer so far, with coverage of the Rockin' the Rez bullriding showcase, a tally of the results for Siksika contenders at the Alberta Indigenous Games (congratulations to all the amazing athletes) and the 21st edition of the Run as One event.

Mase talked to two Siksika women, one a pinup pageant contestant and the other a photographer, who are both building on their talents to pursue their creative dreams. Lexx interviewed Sylvan Breaker, the visionary musician behind They Say Stories, a local band creating waves across the continent.

Newest team member Jayson caught up with Chief Crowfoot at the Treaty 1-11 Gathering, where they talked about the updates to border procedures and the concerns for how it affects our cousins to the south.

Andrew talked to Paiden Doore about his recent signing with the Canadian Sports School Hockey League, where he'll be working on developing his game even further.

All that and more in this issue, as we look ahead to the end of the summer season and the beginning of the autumn season, with the shorter days and more time at home to rest and recharge.

We hope you enjoy this issue, and we'll see you next month!

ETC's and Blackfoot Border Struggles in Discussion at the Treaty 1-11 Gathering

By Jayson Black Kettle

First Nations leaders from across Canada gathered at the Grey Eagle Event Centre in Calgary August 18th - 22nd for the annual Treaty 1-11 Gathering, with cross-border mobility and Enhanced Treaty Cards (ETCs) taking centre stage on Wednesday.

Shanti Olivas of the Pascua Yaqui Tribe in Arizona presented on the ETC, a secure identification card that allows Indigenous peoples to travel more easily between Canada, the United States and Mexico. The card is part of a broader initiative in the U.S. called Sacred Path, which allows federally recognized tribes to issue ETCs to their members.

Although Sacred Path is based in the United States, some Canadian First Nations are exploring partnerships to expand access. The Tsuut'ina Nation is among those working with Sacred Path to examine the potential for ETCs in Canada.

Siksika Nation Chief Ouray Crowfoot, who attended the session, noted the unique challenges faced by the Blackfoot people, whose traditional territory spans the Canada-U.S. border.

"We're the Blackfoot on this side of the border," said Crowfoot, pointing to travel restrictions that arose during the COVID-19 pandemic. "We could go down to Montana, but they can't come up to us."

Crowfoot said he sees promise in the ETC system but also acknowledged concerns raised by other leaders at the gathering. Several

chiefs expressed caution, saying they would prefer to revisit the use of traditional Treaty Cards rather than relying on newer systems connected to government frameworks. "Our brothers down in Browning, they're seeing the benefits," said Crowfoot, referring to the Blackfeet Nation in Montana.

The long-term impact of Enhanced Treaty Cards on First Nations in Canada remains to



.....
We're the Blackfoot on this side of the border," said Chief Ouray Crowfoot, pointing to travel restrictions that arose during the COVID-19 pandemic. "We could go down to Montana, but they can't come up to us."
.....

be seen. Currently, status First Nations individuals can legally enter the United States using their existing status cards.

The Treaty 1-11 Gathering continued through the week, with leaders expected to discuss a number of topics including land, territories, and sovereignty.

Iiniikokan Proves that Shelter is More than Safety and Security, It's Also Community

By Mase Scarlet

At the Iiniikokan Shelter and Recovery Centre, Reynold Brass, a certified addictions counsellor, has been at the shelter since 2022, helping provide a safe place for people seeking help. The shelter can be a highly motivational place due to being located near a liquor store, cannabis store, etc., but creating safety is the first component when people go into the shelter, whether it's overnight, short-term, or long-term recovery. Utilizing resources such as food, clothing, and donations, as well as providing people a place to shower or do laundry, brings immense value to a place like the shelter. They are open year-round, 24/7, with on-call employees. Nobody is forced to come in or leave unless they break the rules, and currently the shelter has 10 beds and 30 mats. If they don't have room, they can refer them elsewhere if the 10 beds and 30 mats are filled up.

Other resources the shelter utilizes include Siksika Health Services, where they have outpatient referral services to meet with addiction counsellors and therapists. The Iiniikokan also does group therapy with Kenakii Mekaisto to teach people who go into the shelter basic life skills they've lost due to being homeless, which can include practicing self-hygiene and how to behave toward others in public and in a home. Small practices like that go a long way in helping people set goals to go back to their families, work, or any other goals. They also practice AA, and they have a recreational area for games like basketball and ping pong. One or two people who have stayed at the shelter have even gone on to be employed there, which can be useful at the shelter—having that shared experi-

ence can lead to empathy that goes a long way. The staff received first aid training a few months ago and trauma bonding training.

The term “family” is something workers at the shelter commonly hear about: “They’ll come in and go, ‘I’ve got no family, nobody cares about me, nobody loves me,’” Reynold Brass said. Some of the people who go through the shelter have families, but due to having addictions, they aren’t allowed back



at home. It puts the family in a hard position, but it also puts the addict in the reality of, “I’m not going to have a home, but I’m stuck in addictions,” Reynold Brass said.

A major milestone for the shelter has been making connections with Rise Calgary, online therapy, and with the mental health support team at Siksika Health by giving the shelter time to bring their people in, and a connection with the Brooks Shelter that provides donations, and Walking the Wolf Trail that brings people back to the reserve. Another milestone has been going under social services: the shelter had trouble getting things done like hiring cooks, janitors, and security

because previously frontline staff were doing that extra work. Another milestone is that the shelter has an updated security system that can help them see every angle of the building.

The shelter currently has a few ideas that they'd like to implement with elders to assist in their recovery program: “Everybody needs elders; they have all the stories, and they hold all the language and knowledge,” Reynold Brass said. Youths aged 18 and up have come in, and they don't usually have grandparents to talk to about those stories or knowledge that can help keep them grounded.

“We’re totally looking for outsiders to support, even if people know how to do crafts and beading, that would be so helpful, right? They could teach them to come in and do drums or any kind of other crafts,” Reynold Brass said.

The work that the shelter does is an impossible job sometimes, but truly important as they learn along the way from history to move forward. Reynold Brass and the Iiniikokan Shelter and Recovery Centre would like to thank the guy who delivers fresh water, social services for taking them under their wing, the fire hall for letting them book tents for their events and helping with barbecues, Siksika Health for allowing the shelter to bring people there to utilize counsellors and therapists, the clinic for helping residents with medications, Walking the Wolf Trail for bringing people in the city back home and providing residents with treatment and housing in Calgary, and SETS and Talking Taxes for helping the people with their taxes.

Siksika Communications Welcomes Jayson Black Kettle to the Team

Siksika Communications is excited to introduce its newest team member, Jayson Black Kettle. A proud member of the Siksika Nation and a Calgary native, Jayson's journey into the world of writing began in 2018. It was that year he realized his passion for writing could evolve into a career.

After completing upgrades at Bow Valley College, Jayson pursued a diploma in journalism at SAIT, graduating in 2020. His academic path continued at the University of Calgary, where he earned a degree in Communications in 2021. During this time, Jayson also contributed stories to LiveWire Calgary, further honing his skills.

Known for his creative approach to writing, Jayson blends personality with informative content—a product of his journalism training. His dream is to one day become a published author, though he admits it's a goal that requires him to “pick up the pen” first.

With a strong background in creative writing, photography, and content creation, and a deep connection to Mohkinstsis, Jayson brings a fresh perspective to the Siksika Communications team. We are thrilled to have him on board—and who knows, you might even catch him on the radio soon!



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COWBOY HEALY RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS GOVERNOR GENERAL'S ACADEMIC MEDAL



By Janine Many Guns

We are incredibly proud to celebrate Cowboy Healy's remarkable achievement in receiving the Governor General's Academic Medal. This is one of the most prestigious academic awards recognized in Canada. It not only highlights his outstanding academic performance but also his resilience, determination, and unwavering commitment to his absolute excellence in academics.

As an Indigenous young man, he has faced and overcome systemic barriers and challenges that many Indigenous communities encounter in Canada. His journey is a testament to his strength, perseverance, and goal-oriented mindset. Despite the obstacles often placed in the path of many Indigenous students, he has demonstrated that, with dedication, kindness, and focus, success is achievable for anyone willing to persevere and stay true to their

goals.

His achievement is a source of inspiration for our family, our community, and all Indigenous youth striving to reach their full potential. We are extremely proud to share that he plans to further his education in Physics and aims to major in Musculoskeletal Radiology, demonstrating his passion for science and helping others through medicine.

We hope his story encourages other youth and our community to pursue their dreams, regardless of the challenges they face, and to remember that their value and potential are limitless.

We are proud of his accomplishments and look forward to seeing him continue to inspire and lead by example, breaking barriers and paving the way for future generations.

Congratulations, Cowboy. Your hard work and spirit have truly earned this honor. We are excited to support you in your journey ahead.

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Bow River



RUN AS ONE

TWO DECADES OF YOUTH EMPOWERMENT IN SIKSIKA



By Shilo Clark

This August, the Run as One Youth Conference returned to Siksika Nation, filling the community with the sound of conversation, joy, and movement. For three days, youth ages 12 to 24 gathered for workshops, cultural teachings, and celebrations designed to inspire resilience and pride.

Hosted by Siksika Health Services, the event is part of the annual Youth Awareness Week, and this year marked 21 years of this empowering event.

The story of Run as One begins in the early 2000s, when Siksika

youth leaders, Eddie Wolfchild, Armond Duck Chief, and Joni Big Old Man, recognized the urgent need to create safe spaces for young people facing challenges such as suicide and substance abuse.

With the support of then-youth addictions counselor Richard Running Rabbit and Siksika Health Services, they began hosting weekly gatherings in school gymnasiums. Crowds of 50 to 60 youth showed up for evenings filled with powwow dancing, theatre, rap battles, guest speakers, and more.

“They saw a need and wanted to do

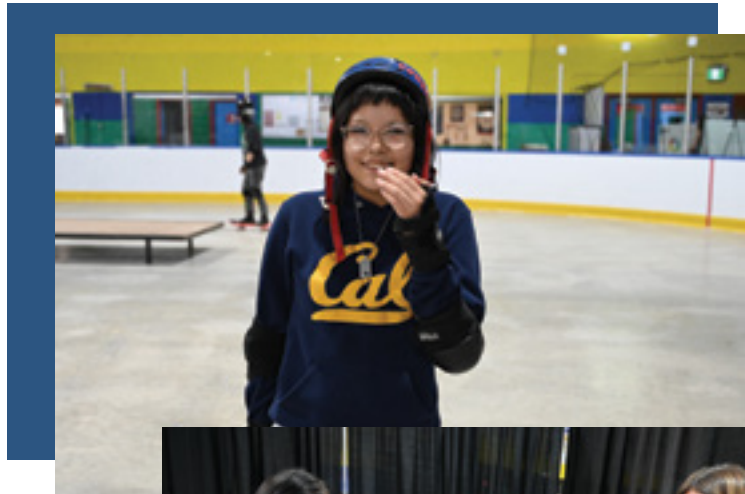
something about it,” recalls Running Rabbit. “I had a little bit of funding, and I told them: Let’s do this together.”

The gatherings soon became known as the Siksika Nation Youth Movement, at that time, complete with a logo designed by the late artist Chico Crowchief. From there, with the encouragement of leaders like the late Darrell Royal, the youth group began envisioning something bigger: a full-fledged conference. That vision became reality in 2004. What started with in-school presentations quickly evolved to Youth Pow-Wows, Rodeos, Conference,

“That’s what Run as One does...it gives youth their first opportunity to shine” - Russell Red Crow

Sports nights and Music Festival. The festival drew artists from across Turtle Island: Crystal Shawanda, Derek Miller, Tribe Called Red, the C-Weed Band, and many more. Local youth also found their first opportunities to perform and host. “Reporters once told us we had the longest-running Indigenous music festival in Canada,” Running Rabbit says. “It happened because we were consistent. We always supported youth.”

One of those youth was Russell Red Crow, who got his start MC’ing the youth powwow and rodeo at Run as One. A role that launched a celebrated career as a powwow MC. “That’s what Run as One does,” Running Rabbit reflects. “It gives youth their first opportunity to shine.”



BOLD EAGLE

ONE RECRUIT'S EXPERIENCE IN THE PROGRAM FOR INDIGENOUS YOUTH IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

By Tyrone Sitting Eagle

Rody Poor Eagle, a proud member of the Siksika Nation, is supported by his mother, Tammy Poor Eagle, his father, Roy Fairbrother, and his brothers Trey, Tyus, Weston, and Wyatt Fairbrother. Recently, Rody took a significant step toward one of his personal goals by attending the Bold Eagle program. This unique initiative, offered by the Canadian Armed Forces, is designed for Indigenous youth in Western Canada. The six-week program blends military training through the Basic Military Qualification (BMQ) with meaningful cultural teachings and traditions, creating a powerful and transformative experience.

Rody first expressed his interest in the Bold Eagle program after seeing a local community member take part and speak highly of the experience. Inspired by their enthusiasm, he began researching the program on his own and quickly became eager to join. After submitting his application, Rody was thrilled to learn that he had been accepted and would be heading to



Wainwright, Alberta, to participate in Bold Eagle.

The first week of the Bold Eagle program is devoted entirely to culture, featuring pipe ceremonies, smudging, and sweat lodges—cre-

ating an environment deeply rooted in Indigenous traditions. At the end of the week, an eagle staff is passed down, marking the transition into the military training phase. Rody shared how intense this training was, involving not only physically demanding workouts but also strict expectations around cleanliness and keeping personal belongings meticulously organized. Despite the challenges, Rody spoke about how much he gained from the experience, describing it as life changing. He learned valuable skills such as navigation, weapons handling, first aid, and field craft—but most importantly, he experienced significant personal growth.

A major experience in the program was going through the gas hut (CBRN Training/Formation CBRN). In this exercise, participants are required to enter the hut while gas is present and put on their masks with minimal exposure. If not done correctly, it results in significant discomfort while breath-



who are interested in the program to take that leap—emphasizing that the only way to achieve your goals is to go for them. He reminds future participants that success requires both mental and physical readiness, but the rewards are well worth the challenge.

ing. Rody described his experience, saying, “We had to experience the gas hut, which was very unpleasant and had to go in four times. There is a Private at the door and he asks when you are ready. I nodded my head, and you immediately feel your face go red and it burns. Even though you are experiencing the discomfort, you still have to complete the drill.”

In addition to the gas hut, participants also had to complete three other tests. The second test was the water test, where Rody had to take his one-litre canteen and his gas mask, place the canteen on top of the mask, drink the water, and then spit it out inside the mask until it was empty.

Although the Bold Eagle program had a powerful impact on Rody, grass dancing continues to hold a special place in his life. He shared that his uncle used to be a grass dancer, and although Rody never saw him dance in person, he saw pictures and heard stories about his uncle’s dancing. That connection inspired Rody to carry on the tradition. By dancing himself, he hopes to keep the legacy alive—and one day, he hopes more of his family members will join him in dancing as well.

In conclusion, the Bold Eagle program had a profound impact on Rody Poor Eagle, not only strengthening his connection to culture but also motivating him to pursue a continued career in the military. He now plans to move forward with Armoured training, including Army 310 and DP1. Rody encourages others

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SIKSIKA GOES TO EDMONTON FOR THE ALBERTA INDIGENOUS GAMES

By Jasmine Majoros

The Alberta Indigenous games were held in Edmonton from Aug 7th to 16th 2025, as the biggest indigenous summer games in the world, it goes without saying that many of our youths from Siksika precipitated in the games. Siksika Media would like to congratulate and proudly acknowledge the dedication, passion, and perseverance of all our athletes, coaches, and supporters. Through hard work, teamwork, and resilience, they remind us that sports are more than competition—they are a celebration of discipline, unity, and the pursuit of resilience. We also recognize the families, mentors, and community members who stand behind our athletes, providing encouragement and strength. We honor not only the victories on the field, court, or track, but also the spirit of respect, sportsmanship, and determination that inspires us all. Due there being no official complete list of all those who placed in the summer games and based on the information collected we sincerely apologize for those who may have been missed.

U13 Girls Na'to'sapi Basketball team- Gold

U11Boys Na'to'sapi Basketball team- Silver

U15 Boys Da Bombers Baseball team B Division - Gold

U15 Girls North Blackfoot Warriors Basketball team- Bronze

U19 Boys North Blackfoot Warriors

Basketball team- Bronze

U11 Kids Baseball team- Gold

U13 Siksika Na'to'sapi girls Volleyball team- 7th

U14 Siksika Na'to'sapi girls Volleyball team- 5th

(Maeanna Levac) U14 Co-Ed Lacrosse Alberta Indigenous Baggataway Council team- Silver

(Lael Levac) U11 Co-Ed Lacrosse Alberta Indigenous Baggataway Council team- Gold

2 days of Track and Field

U9 Boys 150m:

Everson Calf Robe- Silver

U18 Girls 200m:

Clara Sun Walk - Gold

Ruby Sun Walk- Silver

U11 Girls 600m:

Hevenly Bouma- Bronze

U9 Boys 600m:

Everson Calf Robe- silver

U11 boys 600m:

Kessel White Quills- Gold

Julian Big Tobacco- Silver

U13 Girls 800m

Mo Black Kettle- Silver

U13 Boys 800m:

Arlan Yellow Old Woman- Bronze

U15 Girls Discus:

Clara Sun Walk- Silver

U13 Girls 800m:

Mo Black Kettle- Silver

U13 Boys 200m:

Arlan Yellow Old Woman- Silver

U13 Girls 200m:

Mo Black Kettle- Bronze

U13 Boys discus:

Jody Wells- Gold

Arlan Yellow Old Woman - Silver

150m Boys U11:

Kessel White Quills- Gold

Philip Wigmore- Silver

U13 Girls 800m:

Diamond Calf Robe- Bronze

Spirit of Belonging Award- Julian Big Tobacco

Girls U15 3000m:

Ruby Sun Walk- Gold

U15 Girls 800m:

Ruby Sun Walk Silver

U15 Girls 3000m:

Diamond Calf Robe & Mo Black

Kettle- Silver

U11 Boys Discus:

Kessel Medicine Shield- Gold

Jaxon Melting Tallow- Bronze

U11 Boys High Jump:

Kessel Medicine Shield- Gold

U11 Girls High Jump:

Namika Medicine Shield- Bronze

U11 Girls 4 x 100 Relay:

First Namika Medicine Shield, Nataliyah Sun Walk, Celeste Wells, and Hevenly Bouma- Gold

U11 Girls Discus:

Namika Medicine Shield-Gold

Celeste Wells- Bronze

U13 Boys High Jump:

Arlan Yellow Old Woman- Silver

U11 Boys 4 X 100 Relay:

Kessel White Quills, Philip Wigmore, Jaxon Melting Tallow, and Julian Big Tobacco- Gold

U9 Boys 4 x 100 Relay:

Everson Calf Robe- Gold

U11 Girls 4 x 100 Relay:

Payton Many Heads, Arianni Ayoungman, Bailey Black Horse, and Mo Black Kettle- Bronze

U9 Girls 4 X 100 Relay:

Kirea Medicine Shield- Gold

U18 Girls 4 x 100 Relay:

Ruby Sun Walk, Diamond Calf Robe, Mo Black Kettle, and Clara Sun Walk- Gold

U18 Girls High Jump:

Ruby Sun Walk- Gold

U9 Boys Javelin:

Everson Calf Robe- Bronze

U9 Girls Javelin:

Kirea Medicine Shield- Gold

U11 Boys 1200m:

Kessel White Quills- Gold

Taylor Many Heads- Silver

Julian Big Tobacco- Bronze

U11 Girls 1200m:

Hevenly Bouma- Silver

Nataliyah Sun Walk- Bronze

U9 Girls Shot Put:

Kirea Medicine Shield- Gold

U11 Boys Shot Put:

Kessel White Quills- Silver

Jaxon Melting Tallow- Bronze

U11 Girls Shot Put:

Namika Medicine Shield- Silver

Celeste Wells- Bronze

U13 Boys Long Jump:

Arlan Yellow Old Woman- Silver

U13 boys 1200m:

Arlan Yellow Old Woman- Gold

Easton Labelle- Silver

U18 Girls Long Jump:

Serenity Calf Robe- Bronze

U9 Girls 300m:

Kirea Medicine Shield- Bronze

U19 Girls 1500m:

Ruby Sun Walk- Gold

U9 Boys 300m:

Everson Calf Robe- Bronze

U15 Girls 1200m:

Diamond Calf Robe- Silver

Mo Black Kettle- Bronze

U11 Boys 300m:

Kessel Medicine Shield- Gold

U13 Girls 300m:

Mo Black Kettle- Silver

U13 Boys 300m:

Arlan Yellow Old Woman- Silver

U18 Girls 400m:

Ruby Sun Walk- Silver

U11 Boys 100m:

Philip Wigmore- Gold

Kessel White Quills- Silver

U13 Girls 100m:

Payton Many Heads- Silver

U11 Boys Javelin:

Kessel White Quills- Gold

Philip Wigmore- Silver

U9 Boys Long Jump:

Everson Calf Robe- Bronze

U11 Girls Javelin:

Hevenly Bouma- Silver

U13 Girls 100m:

Arlan Yellow Old Woman- Silver

U13 Boys Shot Put:

Arlan Yellow Old Woman- Gold

Jody Wells- Silver

FROM SIKSIKA TO THE CSSHL: PAIDEN DOORE'S HOCKEY JOURNEY

Story by Andrew Breaker

Photos by Paiden Doore



Paiden Doore, a 17-year-old athlete from Siksika Nation, has taken a big step in his hockey career. On July 22, 2025, Paiden officially signed with the Canadian Sports School Hockey League (CSSHL) and will be playing for the ISA Eagles (Indigenous Sports Academy) in the U17 Prep Division.

Paiden is the son of Jacey Doore and Cassidy Saddleback. While he has played baseball and golf, hockey has always been his main passion.

Paiden first began skating in the novice age group, and now has more than a decade of experience – 10-11 years on the ice. His hockey journey started with the Strathmore Timbits, spending much of his career with Strathmore's hockey program. He later returned to Siksika for his second year in U18 Midgets, which became a turning point in his development.

"I came back for my second year in U18 and that has been the best decision I have made. I was able to move around more and work on my awareness and defensive skills and working on my shot more often, more places I can shoot from – that has been one of the biggest factors I've worked on. Especially for my edge work, balance towards my game, and making me a stronger skater." - Paiden Doore on coming back to Siksika for his second year in U18. Paiden credits his father as his biggest motivation:

"My dad was the one who inspired me to play defence and become a bigger and stronger player like he was."

Paiden believes his passing ability and defensive awareness helped him secure his spot with the Indigenous Sports Academy team. His skill set allows him to both set up plays and shut down opponents, balancing offence and defence as a true two-way

defenceman. Looking ahead, Paiden's goals include improving his shot, sharpening his edge work and balance, building his work ethic, and being a strong team player. When asked about advice for others aiming to reach his level, Paiden shared:

"Hard work, dedication, working hard and to study the player who you are up against and being able to make a difference towards everyone who is around you, and to prove who you are, what you're capable of doing, and being a better version of yourself to be a better and stronger hockey player."
– Paiden Doore

Paiden's journey is not just his own – it's one the entire Nation is proud of. His success reflects the talent and determination of Siksika youth athletes pursuing their dreams. Congratulations, Paiden! Your community will always be here, supporting and cheering you on.

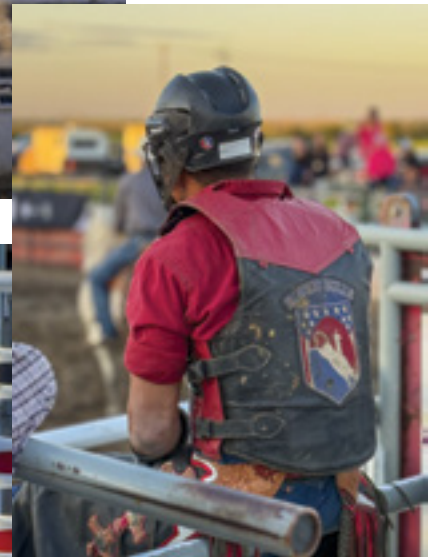
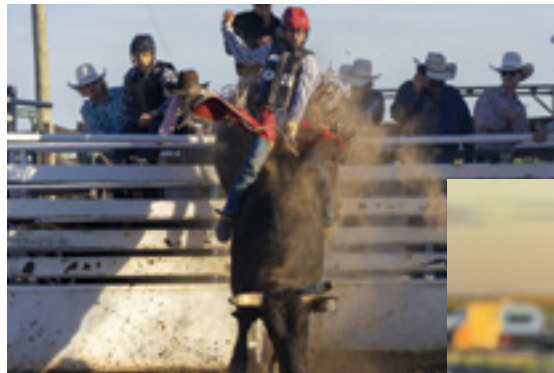
ROCKIN' THE REZ 2025

Story and photos
by Lexxington Manyheads

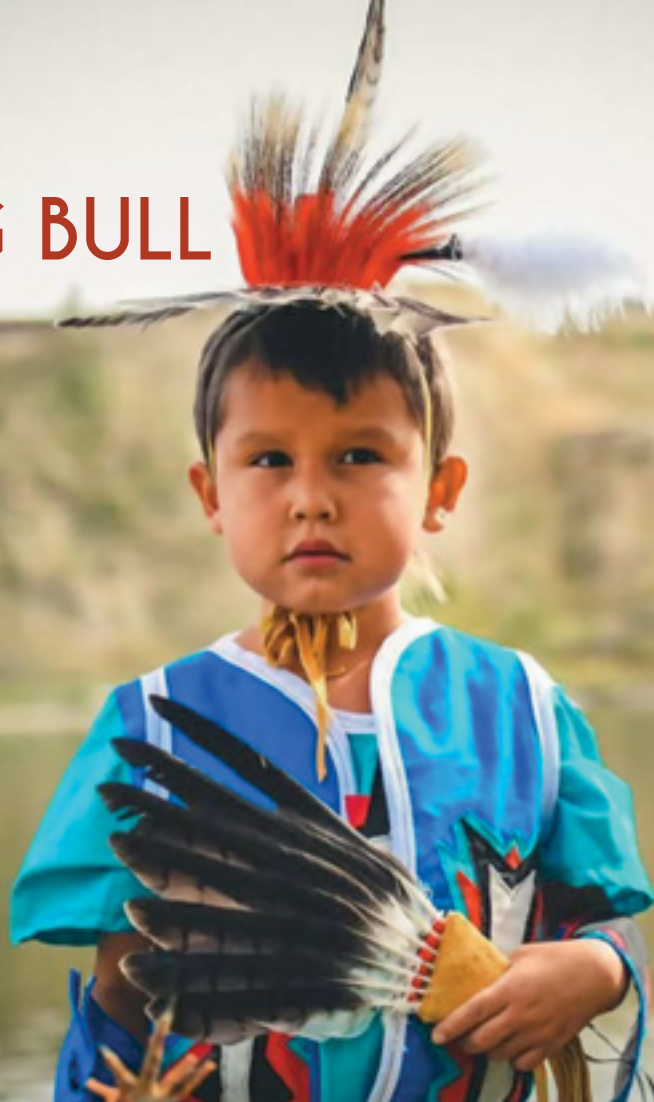
What a night! The arena was electric as bull riders from across the Nation came together for an unforgettable showdown at Rockin' the Rez Bull Riding – proudly hosted by Doore Bucking Bulls.

From high-stakes rides to heart-pounding action, this event brought the community together in true rodeo spirit. Thank you to everyone who came out and supported the riders and celebrated the strength, skill, and culture of Indigenous bull riding.

Until next year – keep rockin' the Rez!



MARY BIG BULL



Story by Mase Scarlet
Photos by Mary Big Bull

Mary Big Bull, a Siksika Nation member, first picked up a camera seriously after having her daughter Lily (now seven years old) when she was going through postpartum depression. It was something her husband suggested after asking what Mary might be good at to help her out of the way she was feeling. Mary said, “I’ve always wanted to do photography,” so her husband bought her a Nikon camera, and the first thing she captured was family photos for her Aunt Lisa.

A little bit about Mary: she is 35 years old, and her parents are Mona and Daryl McDonald. She also has three kids and a husband. Aside from photography, she manages Boychief Trading Company, Prairie Gift Company, and manages their

social media, and she works part-time as a nurse.

In Mary’s words, she’s known in the Indigenous world for her powwow photography, but outside of that, she’s recognized for capturing fight cards such as boxing, Muay Thai, kickboxing, and MMA. She gained experience working her camera by asking every gym in Calgary she could think of if she could take photos to better understand her equipment—because the first big event she was asked to photograph was the Muay Thai World Cup, which was memorable for her.

Another memorable event she photographed was the Siksika Band Designate Conference back in March. She recalls, “I left feeling really refreshed and happy,”

Mary said. The way people react to her photos is also one of the main reasons she has an interest in photography, especially portrait work. “I want them to leave our session feeling better about themselves because I know how it feels to struggle with low self-esteem. I know how it feels to struggle with not liking yourself,” Mary said.

There were also three other local photographers—whom she mainly asked questions to for help with her photography, aside from her husband, who also practices photography. As a photographer, there will be times when you feel discouraged looking at other photographers’ work, but the biggest advice Mary shared was: “Try not to compare yourself to others. Every photographer in the world probably thinks

the same thing: My photos aren't good enough. Just learn and be open to learning. Be open to asking questions. For me, I'm an open book, so I'm always happy when people come to ask me questions. And just appreciate the kind of style that you bring to the world, because not everyone's photographic style is gonna be the same."

Mary said

Another important thing to Mary is sharing our culture. "I want people to have photos to look back on because photos are forever. That's what I always tell people. Everyone passes, right? When their time is up, they go. At least with my photos, they'll have something to look back on," Mary said. She also explained why photos are integral to her after losing her grandma at 12—her most favorite person—sharing that having old photos of her helped Mary grieve by giving her something to hold onto.

Mary mainly uses three Nikon cameras that she switches between. To her, every photographer has a specific brand they like to work with—whether

it's Nikon, Canon, or Sony—but for Mary, Nikon holds a sentimental value because her first camera was bought by her husband, her second by her parents, and her third through a small business grant. "Each camera is different. Each camera has good things and bad things about them," Mary said when asked if she'd work with Sony or Canon.

An all-time favorite photo for Mary is a picture of her son at a powwow, standing with just his bustles and sticks, wearing his regular clothes while looking at the men's fancy dancers in the distance. "I found it so powerful because kids like my son experience the world differently, and I found that this photo encompassed how I felt. I don't know if he'll ever wear a full powwow outfit because he doesn't like stuff on his head. He doesn't really like stuff on his ankles for the angoras, right? So it's like, he was just sparing himself, and he was just watching all these people, and he probably was just amazed



by it," Mary said.

Through our conversation, Mary also expressed how important it is to have a passion for other things so you come back to your main passion feeling refreshed and energized. "At the end of the day, my family comes first. When I started my photography, I was all in with my photography, and I was shooting anything I could, but now it's like my family, and that's how it should be, right? Your family always comes first. Honor yourself and your family, and do what you love on the side. Photography's my hobby. So just do things you enjoy in life and take things one day at a time. Life is not easy for any of us," Mary said about her family.

She also expressed an interest in one day capturing the UFC and a concert—specifically an MGK concert. Check out her photography pages on Instagram and Facebook at "Mary Big Bull Photography" to see her work—and one day, her UFC photos!



THEY SAY STORIES: FROM SIKSIKA TO SEATTLE

By Lexington Many Heads

They Say Stories is a rising indie rock band from Siksika Nation, blending raw guitar-driven sound with influences of traditional singing and '90s bands such as Pavement, The Pixies, Dinosaur Jr., Sonic Youth, and Fugazi, to name a few. The band comprises Sylvan Breaker (front man, main singer-songwriter, and guitar player from Siksika Nation), Dalton Dodginghorse (the drummer and a member of the Tsuu'tina Nation and Siksika Nation), and two non-Indigenous members, Christa Clifford (vocalist), and Liam Gonzalez (bassist). Together they channel a unique sound – a sound that tells stories.

The band's name, They Say Stories, is rooted in the tradition of oral storytelling. For Sylvan, stories – whether about family, folklore, or legends like Napi – were a key part of growing up and understanding identity and culture. These stories, often told by his mother, shaped who he is today. The name reflects the idea that who we are is formed by the stories we hear and carry with us throughout our lives. While They Say Stories is a relatively new project, the musical chemistry has been building for a while. "Dalton and I have been playing together the longest and it's only been about two years that him and I have been playing together," Sylvan said. "Everyone else came in

after. Christa's the newest, about six months in, and Liam's been with us for over a year."

Despite their short time together, the band has already made serious waves. In a whirlwind moment of recognition, They Say Stories went from local indie rock band to being



Photo provided by Sylvan Breaker

played all the way in Seattle, WA, on KEXP radio, and their debut album, *Daydreams Will Do*, was featured on KEXP's 6 Albums to Listen to This Week this past July. Featuring songs of demos written as far back as 20 years ago, *Daydreams Will Do*, released on July 4, 2025, is an album about a relationship between two people and the stages one goes through – love and sometimes heartbreak.

Sylvan Breaker provides a deeper insight into the story behind *Day-*

dreams Will Do and how They Say Stories came to be. Sylvan has been playing the guitar for a long time. He first started playing with his cousin, and they started out with nothing but a chord poster and book and bouncing off each other's playing. Many years later, prior to They Say Stories, he was in a different

band called Chief n' Council, a two-piece garage rock band that started in 2017. During this time, Sylvan was writing songs for Chief n' Council, and a lot of good ones too. He also had songs that he had written that were just as good, but they didn't quite fit the mold for what Chief n' Council was doing. These songs were softer and went in a different direction.

Sylvan shared, "For me, I've always kind of pressed record. When you're always writing stuff or creating stuff, I always go back to what Tenacious D said: 'Always press record.' So, I ended up having so many of these different demos."

Sylvan also co-collaborated on these songs with Siksika member, the late Gerrance Sitting Eagle, who helped write and played with Sylvan in previous bands. Gerrance was the kind of gifted musician who could pick up anything and play anything,

A DEBUT ALBUM THAT SPEAKS FROM THE HEART

and when Sylvan and Gerrance would play together, their spirits would connect and communicate with each other on a different level. “He was older than me, he was my older brother. I had these songs, and I didn’t want to give up on them,” Sylvan shared.

Before Gerrance passed away, Sylvan had received a grant from Calgary Arts Development and then he started working in Tsuu T’ina. Sylvan had met Dalton at work, and they both found out that they each had interests in playing music – Dalton on the drums and Sylvan on the guitar. After sitting there for a while, one of the oldest songs being Wedding Party, which was written 20 years ago, Sylvan brought some of the demos with drumming he had created with Gerrance to Dalton, post-pandemic, and his goal was to preserve how the drums were played, in honour of his brother.

Realizing that these songs were gold, they decided to go through them, record, and then see what happens after. Little did they know, this would be the door that would lead to the start of They Say Stories. They Say Stories recently released their debut album, Daydreams Will Do, on July 4. It was recorded at Child Stone Studios in Calgary, Alberta, with producer Chris Dadge. The band found the process both challenging and inspiring – especially their first few days recording drums, which were intense and

meticulous under Chris’s guidance (himself a drummer). Dalton, the band’s drummer, laid down all the drum tracks in just three days during 8-10-hour sessions, and then they moved on to recording guitar, bass, and vocals. The recording required patience and trust in the process, with the full picture only becoming clear during mixing and mastering.

Originally, Sylvan envisioned these songs as two EPs – one of them

I was tired of dreaming. I needed to wake up and me releasing this album was me waking up.

being called Portraits of Love, where it would represent the stages of a relationship – but the project evolved into a full-length album. Songs like 49 Love, Wedding Party, Special Tea, and Fool For You are just a few of the songs off the album that are very strong and very relatable. “I’ve been there and know that feeling. Those are songs of someone who’s gone through it.”

Sylvan also reflected on the song Keep Dreaming, and compared it to his experience with the release of the album: “I was tired of dreaming. I needed to wake up and me releasing this album was me waking

up.”

The songwriter’s favourite track to write was Rawr XD. It came together late one night after he shared the opening lyrics with his partner, who insisted he write them down. Inspired by his love for Godzilla, the song became an ode to the iconic monster. Although the official Godzilla “rawr” couldn’t be licensed, he improvised and performed the “rawr” himself at the end of the track. Interestingly, alternate versions of Rawr XD exist, including a more melancholic “howl” rendition and even a banjo version, each offering a different emotional tone. The hardest song to write was Ransoms, particularly because of its intro riff. While he loved the opening, figuring out how to follow it proved challenging and took time to de-

velop. As for knowing when a song is finished, it’s a mix of instinct and feedback. “Sometimes, you just kind of feel it, that nothing else could be done.” He also relies on a bit of research and input from others to confirm when a track is ready.

Musically, Daydreams Will Do doesn’t stick to one genre; rather, it blends different styles and vocal techniques, showcasing the band’s versatility. From soft melodies to gritty growls, the album reflects the band’s range.

[continued on next page >>](#)

I told my partner; I believe in these songs... I just felt reaffirmed that what I'm doing is right, and there are people out there who want to listen to our songs

A standout moment includes a powerful one-take yell on Special Tea, inspired by the lead vocalist's background in powwow singing, which helped shape his breath control and vocal strength.

It's clear that the band's immense talent, variations in sound, and rawness – both musically and emotionally – boosted their stance in the music scene and provided them the opportunity to be featured on a well-known radio station based in Seattle, Washington.

After noticing a colleague was featured on the KEXP music program Sounds of Survivance, Sylvan reached out to DJ Kevin Sur on July 1 and asked him if he could submit his music to him. Kevin said yes, so Sylvan sent him a demo code and their Electronic Press Kit, and Kevin

loved what he was hearing. Going back and forth for some time, Sur asked for more download codes, and within 90 minutes of sending the first email, Sylvan got news that his music would be playing on KEXP radio. "...He was like, 'Hey I passed this on to DJ Cheryl Waters and you guys are going to be on air, so tune in now!' And I was like, 'Oh my gosh, what's going on? Are you kidding me? This never happens.' And sure enough, it did, and I was dumbfounded."

Later, Sur messaged again with the news about the album making KEXP's weekly list on their Instagram page. "I was floored," Sylvan said. "I told my partner; I believe in these songs... I just felt reaffirmed that what I'm doing is right, and there are people out there who want to listen to our songs."

Before ending the inspiring and insightful conversation with Sylvan, he shared a beautiful answer to what kind of messages and emotions he hopes the band's songs leave with their listeners: "That you can live your life to it. You can have your conversation with whoever, and you can be with who you want to be with and still have our music in the background, and it be part of your life. And when you're ready to hear that song that you need to hear at the time, that it gets you through whatever you're going through." They Say Stories will be hitting the stage on September 12 at 6 p.m. at WhatFest at the Neverland Boutique in Calgary, Alberta. They are also in the process of making vinyl records for Daydreams Will Do, so, come fall.

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Amber Grable

Living her Pinup Dream

By Mase Scarlet

On August 9th, 2025 Amber Heavy Runner, a community member from Siksika Nation, took the stage to compete at Ms. Canadian Pinup Pageant in New Brunswick with her professional name "Amber Grable" this year she scored impressively in the top 5 again!

Amber's journey has been resilient to set a clear message for her kids, the youth, and the nation. She is a healthcare worker, a mother of four, and she was diagnosed with fibromyalgia—a chronic illness that causes chronic pain but she has since been able to manage it with her fitness and mental health journey.

She first saw a flyer for a World of Wheels pinup contest in 2022 and to her it felt like a sign for her to pursue this route of creativity and to celebrate her weight loss and finally being able to manage her illness and to set an example for her kids "I'm trying to set an example for my kids to chase your dreams no matter what" Amber said.

A pinup look for Amber can take half an hour if she's in a rush but for a contest a look will take two to three hours—she has done a pinup look inspired after her favourite vintage cartoon character Betty Boop and a look that incorporated MMIW on her dress and she will continue

to use her platform to raise awareness to MMIW. For her pinup looks Amber gets inspiration from vintage



styles and her late grandmother's clothes that she inherited "I just love vintage style from seeing old pictures of my grandma." Amber said.

Amber had at her side to support—her family, her nation, and the pinup community which she explained is a welcoming community of people

"other girls will come up to me and compliment me and it just makes me feel good, the pinup community and everyone involved is so welcoming and it just felt like i belonged somewhere." Amber said.

"I want our youth to know that their culture is powerful, their stories are valid, and their presence belongs everywhere – even in places that were never built for us. You can be strong, soft, Indigenous, and unstoppable. Don't wait for the world to make space – take up space with pride." Amber shared with us.



For media inquiries or sponsorship opportunities, contact: amber-rae1990@hotmail.com Instagram: @pinupamber-grable

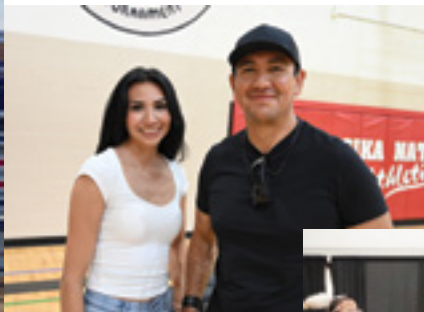
When she wins Ms. Canadian Pinup her next ambition will be the international pinup competition held in Vegas "Queen of the

Car Show." We wish you luck Amber from everyone at Siksika Media and Communications in all your dreams and wherever you take your presence!



photos by Siksika Media

people, places and faces



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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

Kiitamoko Passkaan (Everybody Dance) Powwow
Saturday, September 13, 2025
12.00 - 4.00 pm
611 4th St. SW
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Downtown Calgary
Dancer registration starts at 10.30 am

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

Motherhood is Sacred
Thursdays 5.00 PM - 6.00 PM
Siksika Health Wellness Center
Contact Siksika Mental Health for info: 403.734.5660

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For information: hrm@siksikafamilyservices.com
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Please quote Reunification Nurse in your cover letter.

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Please see Siksika Health HR for job description and additional information.
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Human Resources Department

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Fatherhood is Sacred
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Siksika Health Wellness Center
Contact Siksika Mental Health for info: 403.734.5660

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

Employment Opportunity
Reunification Nurse
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Provides a combination of duties to ensure that the family has health and medical supports in place to support their health and wellbeing.
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