

OTIPEMISIWAK

(Oh-teh-pim-swak) – The people who own themselves

Issue 2 / 2019

Métis Tourism Issue

Exploring
the Métis
tourism
industry in
Alberta

Also inside:

- ∞ Alberta Métis Fest
- ∞ Youth & Seniors
Gathering
- ∞ Scrip Conference
- ∞ Business Mixer



THE OFFICIAL VOICE OF THE MÉTIS NATION OF ALBERTA

Métis Tourism: Honouring Our Mark on Alberta



As the weather warms and spring begins transforming the prairies, I am excited to present this latest edition of the *Otipemisiwak Magazine* featuring stories about Métis Tourism. This issue, our second installment for 2019, is almost a year in the making.

Inside you'll find the stories of hard-working Métis entrepreneurs carving out their place in Alberta's growing tourism industry. Métis history and culture are woven into Alberta's identity and Métis Nation of Alberta citizens are sharing this proud legacy with visitors from near and far.

Of course, we are very proud of the developments at Métis Crossing. In this issue, you can read more about the past, present, and future of Métis Crossing. This significant site, made of original Métis river lot titles, is the first Métis cultural gathering centre owned and operated by the Métis Nation.

Learn about Keith Diakiw's lifelong passion for geology and how it led him to found Talking Rock Tours, an adventure tour company discovering Alberta's geological and Indigenous history. Similarly, Joe Urie of Jasper Tour Company and Brenda Holder of Mahikan Trails have followed their passion to the Alberta Indigenous tourism industry and share their cultural legacy with visitors from all over the world.

You can also catch up on recent major MNA events like the Youth & Seniors Gathering, Métis Rights: Land & Scrip Conference, and 6th Annual Business Mixer.

Of great significance, is the new Métis Harvesting Policy and Agreement. We've included a couple of the most frequently asked questions, but a longer list of questions (and answers) can be found on our website.

As always, for more about our upcoming events, new services, and programs please visit our website or our social media for the latest information.

Thank you for picking up this latest issue of *Otipemisiwak* and happy reading.

Best wishes,

Audrey Poitras
President,
Métis Nation of Alberta

OTIPEMISIWAK

Published by:
The Métis Nation of Alberta

Co-Editors:
Amy Dillon, Rolando Inzunza

Contributors:
Olivia Condon, Gabriel Gauthier,
Jonathan Harline, Kelly Johnston,
Leanne Miller

Graphic Design:
Adam Still

Photography:
Olivia Bako, Patrick Bako, Jenn Clara,
Amy Dillon, Hannah Hamilton,
Johathan Harline, Des Iles,
Rolando Inzunza, Edie Klassen,
Taylor Mclean, Leanne Miller,
Luke Muise, Adam Still,
Melissa Styba, Ila Vivier

Contact Information:
Métis Nation of Alberta
Provincial Office
#100-11738 Kingsway NW
Edmonton, AB, T5G 0X5
Phone: 780-455-2200
Toll-Free: 1-800-252-7553
albertametis.com

 @ABMétis

 @Albertametis

 @Albertametis



On the Cover: Guests of Métis Crossing's *Paddle into the Past* experience make their way down the North Saskatchewan River. Photo by Travel Alberta.

CONTENTS

ISSUE 2 / 2019

Event Recaps

- 4 **Youth & Seniors Gathering**
- 5 **Métis Land: Rights and Scrip Conference**
- 6 **MNA Business Mixer**
- 7 **Woman of Vision Awards**
- 8 **Alberta Métis Fest**
- 14 **Native Hockey Provincials**



8

Features

- 16 **Métis Tourism Map**
Start planning your next road trip with our illustrated map
- 18 **Métis Crossing**
Alberta's first Métis cultural interpretive centre is one of the summer's top destinations
- 22 **Connecting the Drops**
Joe Urie's Jasper Tour Co. explores and honours his ancestral home
- 24 **A Rocky Start to Great Adventure**
How Keith Diakiw followed a wandering path to his dreams
- 26 **Trail Blazers**
Indigenous tour company taking the mountains by storm



30

- 28 **Indigenous Tourism is Exploding!**
2019 Alberta Indigenous Tourism Summit
- 29 **Recipe**
How to make bannock
- 30 **New Métis Harvesting Policy**
Historic agreement reaffirms connection to Métis Nation homeland

EVENT RECAPS

BY JONATHAN HARLINE + ROLANDO INZUNZA



Youth & Seniors Gathering

FROM JANUARY 18 TO 20, 2019 the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) hosted the third annual Youth and Seniors Gathering. Métis from across the province came together, at the Edmonton Inn and Conference Centre, for a *Uniting of Generations*. Métis young and old shared knowledge, culture, skills, and talents with one another.

This year's event was jam packed with great entertainment, cultural workshops, and informative speakers. Fiddler Brianna Lizotte and comedian Maureen Belanger entertained attendees at the meet and greet on Friday night. The days were filled with poetry readings, storytelling, and interesting speakers. David Parent, of the University of Alberta, spoke about the importance of technology in connecting generations; Métis veteran John McDonald gave an inspiring presentation on Métis

and Indigenous veterans during WWII; and Mitch Case and Cassidy Carron from the Métis Nation of Ontario's Youth Council, talked about mobilizing youth to carry the Métis culture forward. Sharing on this multi-generational platform helped guests of all ages learn where, as a community, we've come from and where we're headed.

Cultural workshops provided hands-on opportunities to take part in traditional cultural practices, including beading, jigging, traditional medicines, and Michif lessons.

To close out the weekend, *Métis Child and Family Dancers* and *Rockin' Fiddle Band* wowed the audience with their talents.

Over 400 participants experienced the heritage and legacy of their ancestors. Métis Albertans young and old shared their experiences with one another, helping strengthen bonds within the Métis community. ∞



MÉTIS LAND: Rights & Scrip Conference

THE FIRST CONFERENCE OF ITS KIND, the Métis Land: Rights and Scrip Conference was an important gathering of scholars, legal professionals, MNA officials, and MNA citizens. From February 8 to 9, attendees discussed the history and consequences of Métis scrip. The Framework Agreement for Advancing Reconciliation and its plans to address issues of scrip, signified a need for further education on this important matter.

Dr. Frank Tough, Professor of Native Studies at the University of Alberta, gave the keynote address, providing an overview of scrip and what it did to Métis people trying to secure rights to their homeland. Scrip was devastating to the Métis, and the effects are still felt today.

Zachary Davis, Indigenous law specialist of Pape Saltier Teillet LLP, discussed the legal ramifications of scrip, a panel of academics and specialists covered the *Moccasin Flats* evictions in Fort McMurray, and Dr. Kisha Supernant, Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Alberta, spoke on Métis archeology. Many more presentations covered subjects like Saint-Paul-des-Métis, scrip and migration, Edmonton river lot inhabitants, and a unique Métis claims process.

Discussion periods after each panel provided citizens an opportunity to talk; some about their personal experiences and hardships and others about moving forward.

Closing the historic event on an intimate note, a spirit of healing and determination filled the talking circle at the end of day two. The MNA continues to fight for the recognition of Métis rights and reconciliation every day. ∞





6th Annual MNA Business Mixer

OUR 6TH ANNUAL BUSINESS MIXER on March 7 was a great success. Workshops focusing on growing small business helped attendees learn more about starting a business, marketing their services, financing, accounting, and procurement for small business.

The trade show featured almost 60 local and Métis-owned companies, all of whom were networking together and with the greater Alberta business community. At the awards and gala evening, we honoured Laura McLaughlin with a *Lifetime Achievement Award* for her efforts in clothing design and selling custom Indigenous clothing and accessories.

One business from each region was presented with a *Business of the Year Award*, honouring the Métis entrepreneurial spirit that drove Canada's early economy and helped shape this country:

- REGION 1:** Kingdom Cats Company, owner Jason King
- REGION 2:** Big Ray Dumais Construction, owner Ray Dumais
- REGION 3:** VIP Occupational Health Services, owners Trevor & Ross Pamburn
- REGION 4:** Mother Earth Essentials, founder Carrie Armstrong
- REGION 5:** Darrel's Bobcat Services, owner & operator Darrel Laboucan
- REGION 6:** Candace Paradis Photography, owner Candace Paradis

"By supporting Métis business and ingenuity, we continue to build a strong Métis Nation and honour our history as some of Canada's first entrepreneurs," said MNA President, Audrey Poitras. ∞



Other Events

Between the major events, we hosted Cultural Enrichment Programs (Peyote Stitch and Fish Scale art), a Community Health Night on Family Law, Jigging Classes, and traveled across Alberta hosting Climate Monitoring Engagement Sessions and bringing Registry Drives to each region.

At any time, you can find out about upcoming events on our website at albertametis.com/events.

Woman of Vision Award

IN SEPTEMBER 2018, President Audrey Poitras was nominated as a 2018/2019 *Global News Woman of Vision*. This program celebrates the accomplishments of outstanding Edmonton area women.

On April 4, 2019, the 24th Annual *Global News Woman of Vision Celebration* was held in Edmonton. The awards event pays tribute to the twelve recipients featured on Global Television during the last year.

We want to congratulate (*and thank*) President Poitras for all her work and her tireless dedication making positive change for the Métis Nation of Alberta and its citizens. ∞





Alberta
**MÉTIS
FEST** 2019





REGION 1
LAC LA BICHE



Alberta Métis Fest

ON MARCH 23, 2019, Albertans came together for the inaugural Alberta Métis Fest celebration.

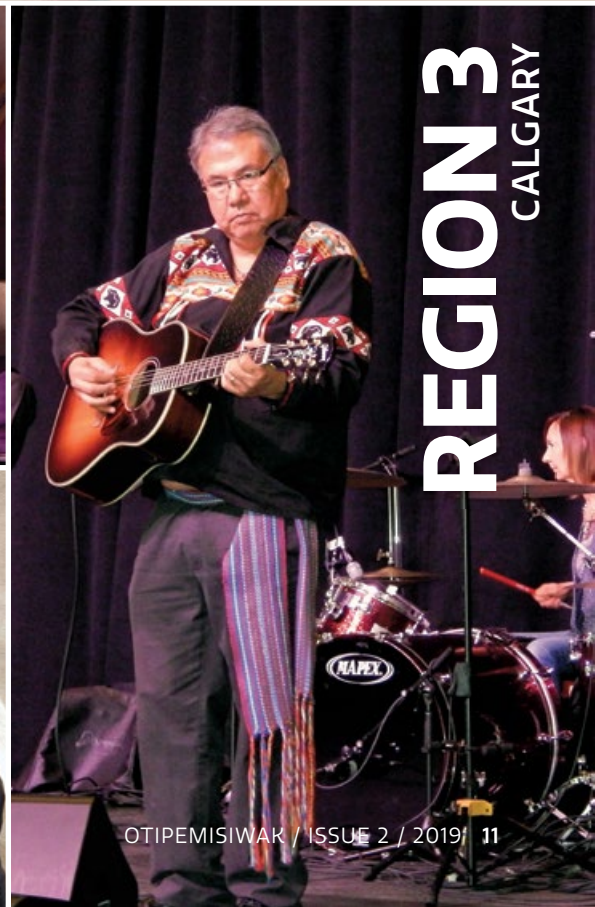
This free, province-wide showcase of Métis culture, talent, and history attracted hundreds of people in each of the Métis Nation of Alberta's six regions. Events were held in Lac la Biche, Bonnyville, Calgary, Edmonton, Slave Lake, and Fort Vermilion. A packed program of live music, jigging contests, and jam sessions promoted Métis heritage and pride to all who attended.

To view more photos from your region's event, visit our Facebook page.



REGION 2
BONNYVILLE





REGION 3
CALGARY



REGION 5
SLAVE LAKE






REGION 6
FORT VERMILION



Native Hockey Provincials

We are the Champions... again!

INTRODUCING YOUR NATIVE HOCKEY ALBERTA CHAMPIONS! The Métis Nation Voyageurs (Novice team) secured their 4th consecutive championship on April 7, during the Native Provincial championship game, with a score of 13 to 3!

Congratulations to the team, all your hard work paid off – we are proud of you! 



UPCOMING EVENTS

Below is a list of upcoming events hosted by the Métis Nation of Alberta and affiliates:

MNA Pancake Breakfast (Head Office):

May 31

**Audrey Poitras Golf Tournament
(Legends Golf Course):**

June 7

**National Indigenous Peoples Day
(Metis Crossing):**

June 21

**Métis Capital Housing Corporation
Community Engagement BBQs (Various
locations)**

Various dates throughout July & August

Annual General Assembly (St. Paul):

August 16-18

Metis Week (Various locations):

November 10-16

For more information visit albertametis.com, or subscribe to our email newsletter at albertametis.com/otipemisiwak-magazine



MÉTIS TOURISM

The Métis have left their mark on Alberta lands in many ways, and these landscapes continue to be a source of inspiration for our people. This province is full of picturesque places where you can connect with Métis history and culture. From prairies to mountains, there's something for everyone, so check out our map of Métis-focused tourist spots!



1 FORT CHIPEWYAN (REGION 1)

Fort Chipewyan, AB
W: fortchipewyantourism.com/explore-wood-buffalo
P: 780-697-3600

Activities:

- ▶ Trapping
- ▶ Fishing

2 FORT DUNVEGAN (REGION 6)

Fairview, AB
P: 780-835-7150
E: historic.dunvegan@gov.ab.ca
W: historicdunvegan.ca

Hours:

Daily 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
 May 15 – Labour Day

Activities:

- ▶ St. Charles Mission Church and Rectory
- ▶ Hudson's Bay Company Factor's House
- ▶ Fur trade tour

10 MAHIKAN TRAILS (REGION 3)

Canmore, AB
P: 403-679-8379
E: brenda@mahikan.ca
W: mahikan.ca

Hours: Monday to Friday 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Winter hours posted seasonally

Activities:

- ▶ Hide tanning
- ▶ Plant medicine first aid
- ▶ Métis bush skills and traditional knowledge
- ▶ Traditional food (berry soup, bannock, pemmican)
- ▶ Trappers' camp

9 PAINTED WARRIORS (REGION 3)

Mountain View County, AB
P: 403-637-9138
E: tracey.paintedwarriors@gmail.com
W: paintedwarriors.ca

Hours: Both summer and winter programs available

3 KIKINO SILVER BIRCH RESORT (REGION 1)

Kikino, AB
P: 780-623-3252

Activities:

- ▶ Comfort camping
- ▶ RV camping
- ▶ Tent camping

4 MÉTIS CROSSING (REGION 2)

Smoky Lake, AB
P: 780-656-2229

E: metiscrossing@metis.org
W: metiscrossing.org

Hours: May long weekend to September long weekend

Activities:

- ▶ Historical tours
- ▶ Live music
- ▶ Camping in Métis Trappers' tents
- ▶ Métis Voyageur Canoe expeditions

5 JASPER TOUR COMPANY (REGION 4)

Jasper, AB

P: 780-852-7070

E: joe@jaspertourcompany.com
W: jaspertourcompany.com

Activities:

- ▶ Guided walks
- ▶ Maligne Valley Cruise
- ▶ Wildlife tours
- ▶ Maligne Canyon Ice Adventures

Activities:

- ▶ Outdoor & cultural skills
- ▶ Kids camps
- ▶ Winter tour packages

8 TAIL CREEK CAMPGROUND (REGION 3)

Alix, AB

P: 403-742-0777

E: camp@ahla.ca

W: albertacampgroundguide.ca/campgrounds/tail-creek-park

Hours:

May – September

Amenities:

- ▶ Fishing
- ▶ Canoeing
- ▶ Baseball diamond
- ▶ Playground

7 ROCKY MOUNTAIN HOUSE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE (REGION 3)

Rocky Mountain House, AB

P: 403-845-2412

E: rocky.info@pc.gc.ca

W: pc.gc.ca/en/lhn-nhs/ab/rockymountain

Hours: 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.,
May 10 – September 3

Activities:

- ▶ Heritage Camping in Métis Trappers' tents
- ▶ Traditional games
- ▶ Moccasin making
- ▶ Bannock making
- ▶ Métis crafts

Don't see your favourite spot? Email your suggestion to mna@metis.org

6 TALKING ROCK TOURS (REGION 2, 3, 4)

Edmonton, AB

P: 780-298-7992

E: keith.diakiw@gmail.com

W: talkingrocktours.com

Activities:

- ▶ Canoe tours
- ▶ Hiking
- ▶ Bird and bison watching
- ▶ Indigenous story telling
- ▶ Fossil collecting



Métis Crossing

An Experience for the
Head, Heart, and Hands

BY LEANNE MILLER





Fall, late 1800s: It's Friday night, and it's been a long week of farming and harvesting for Métis families throughout the Victoria Settlement region, what is now central Alberta. Everyone's waiting for the uplifting musical call of Ben Sinclair's fiddle as his wagon clunks down Victoria Trail. This is the call inviting everyone to come gather at the Cromarty homestead for a barn dance.

The Cromarty's barn is a place for celebration and this night is no exception. As people arrive, sounds of the fiddle, spoons, mouth organs, and the jaw harp waft through the air and the jigging begins. The Red River Jig and Drops of Brandy play as children chase each other in and around the barn; their parents jigging and cheering one another on.

This is just one example of how 19th century Métis gathered at Métis Crossing.

"Métis people... played a major role in connecting the fur trade and in the exploration that was done," explains Juanita Marois, Métis Crossing's Development Manager. "Historically, Métis Crossing was both a gathering and trading place for First Nations from both sides of the North Saskatchewan River." It was here, in the 1860s, George McDougal created the Victoria Mission site. Shortly after, the Hudson's Bay Company built a trading post to service the locals but needed help with running it. So, they ventured to the Red River Colony in Manitoba inviting Métis west to settle the area. Those who accepted the offer traveled in red river carts along the first road connecting Fort Edmonton, Alberta to Fort Garry, Manitoba.

Upon arriving, the Métis settled along the river bringing their unique method of land allocation – river lots. Métis Crossing holds original titles for five river lots and the historical buildings on the site, including two homesteads: The original Cromarty family homestead who's logs were floated as a barge down the river from Edmonton, hand hewn and put together as the house that still remains to this day; and the Sinclair homestead, which was gifted in 2006 from the Ben

PHOTO BY TRAVEL ALBERTA

MÉTIS TOURISM

Sinclair family, deconstructed, moved, and rebuilt in 2007 at Métis Crossing.

The same Ben Sinclair who fiddled his way up and down the Victoria Trail!

Over a century later, Métis Crossing remains a place for celebrations, and is Alberta's premiere centre for Métis cultural interpretation, education, and business development.

The site came into Métis ownership in 2001. Within a year, the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) received a contribution from Canative Housing Corporation through the Belcourt Brosseau Foundation for the full purchase price and Métis Crossing was bought outright. The MNA wanted to secure an autonomous land base for its people and the purchase of Métis Crossing was the key to reaching this goal. The primary mission of the MNA is to improve Métis Albertan's socio-economic status and cultural well-being, and Métis Crossing plays a major role in this. Not only is it fostering Métis ingenuity and a sense of community, but is also the first major Métis cultural gathering centre owned, developed, and operated by the Métis Nation .

"The Métis Nation is a young nation born of its homeland and Métis Crossing wants to share in this story and celebrate in it," Juanita says passionately. In 2019, the exciting addition



of the new Cultural Interpretive Centre will help share the history and stories of the Métis with all who visit. This new building will ensure Métis Crossing continues to be a key gathering place for Métis people, Albertans, Canadians, and tourists alike.

After over a decade of working on the site, Juanita hasn't lost sight of her mission. "Métis Crossing is proud to share the history of the Métis people, while celebrating the present, and looking forward to the future. It is an experiential look into our country's heritage where one can truly engage with the Métis. But most importantly, it's an opportunity to touch people's heads, hands, hearts, and hunger."

Fall 2019: Stay tuned for news on the grand opening of Métis Crossing Interpretive Centre.

Come stay overnight in a trapper's tent, enjoy tours of our museum, historical village, and more this summer! ∞

For more information visit metiscrossing.org, email metiscrossing@metis.org or call 780-656-2229





Connecting the Drops

Joe Urie's Jasper Tour Co. explores and honours his ancestral home

BY KELLY JOHNSTON



Joe Urie knows where (and when) to see some of Jasper National Park's most incredible natural features. The professional interpretive guide and longtime resident knows the area's dynamic flora and world-renowned fauna well.

Joe's business, Jasper Tour Company, operates wildlife viewing and guided walks spring through fall, and is rated #1 on TripAdvisor's Outdoor Activities in Jasper. With his wife Patti at the helm of both the company's operations and, often, the wheel of their 15-passenger van, Joe devotes infectious energy to his goal of delivering an informative and exciting experience for those on board. The online acclaim for Joe and Patti affirms this, with reviewers from all over the world describing an experience uniquely tailored, bursting with

wildlife, and enriched by Joe's excellent storytelling.

"If you go on TripAdvisor, it always goes on about me, me, me. But in all honesty, in all truthfulness, I just deliver. [Patti] does everything else."

Modesty aside, it's no surprise Joe has found his way into guiding. It's a livelihood he shares with a long line of proud Métis ancestors; many of whom lived and worked along the Athabasca river valley since arriving from the Red River area in the 1860's. "My family were fur traders back in the day," he says. "I still deal in fur, we just don't kill them."

In fact, during the Fur Trade, his great-great-grandfather, Louis Fosseneuve (or "Captain Shott" as history remembers him) used the Athabasca River to open essential northern trade routes through what is now Alberta. Shott successfully navigated

the Athabasca's Grand Rapids, which allowed explorers and traders an alternate route to resources. "He went and basically broke the back of the Methye Portage. That was his claim to fame in Alberta history." Currently, Captain Shott is featured in a display at the Royal Alberta Museum in Edmonton.

Now, with his home in Jasper near the glacial source of the same great 1,231 kilometre river, Joe feels a deep connection to the waters that were an integral aspect of not only his family's history, but Canada's too.

"When I came here in 1988, first of all, my mom was born in Fort McMurray, which we'll say is in the "middle of the river"; my grandmother was born out of Fort Chip, which is the "end of the river", and I came to be at the beginning of the river, not really knowing... that we'd been on this river since 1860, and

that our family history was important to the river. I didn't know it and things just kind of started revealing themselves to me."

Uncovering and understanding his family's history is of great importance to Joe, and he feels he is on his own personal "voyage of discovery" to earn back the knowledge of where he comes from. In this way, he is slowly starting to "connect the drops", as he puts it, with much of this ancestry stemming from lives lived along the rivers. It hasn't been easy, though - his grandmother, Josephine, comes from the "hiding in plain sight" generation, and for her, much of their family history is simply not up for discussion. "There are so many Métis families - there was a black hole for a long time. And that partly was systemic, it was my grandmother's response to systemic violence and racism and that sort of thing. She buried a lot of stuff. And so, as of the last ten years or so, it's suddenly 'the doors are open' and you can start going down those hallways and finding out these stories which were not really spoken about in a lot of families."

Joe strives to share the information he has worked hard to uncover with the people on his tours. He says they "start out as guests and leave as friends." He provides historical and cultural context to the land and where possible, will give the Cree and Michif words for the plants and animals they encounter. By layering these Métis elements into his tours, he is lending a hand in the preservation of these important languages.

But it's not all a history lesson at Jasper Tour Company, it's an intimate guided adventure with a focus on fun. Joe shares his great sense of humour with guests. He finds that when people are laughing and entertained they are

more likely to be paying attention. Joe also feels a deeper, more profound experience in nature can be found in tours of smaller numbers. "I worked as a guide for over 20 years. One of the [tour businesses] grew from a boutique experience to a 50-60 [people] strong tour, which was frustrating. I was coming home miserable," he recalls.

So, with encouragement and support from his wife, he decided it was time they did their own thing. With amazing luck, the desirable business name, Jasper Tour Company, was still available. With a maximum group size of 13, Joe tailors his narrative to reach each guest at their individual level based on their existing knowledge, age, and learning style. "Everyone has a different modality," he explains.

Today, Joe knows Jasper's wilderness is headed for change. The pine beetle devastation, increased tourism, and society's constant conflict

between valuation of wildlife and economic progress will all have their impacts on the park in the coming years. Yet, he remains optimistic. Getting people out onto the landscape to see these incredible animals in person and fostering conversations about them, will promote understanding and, hopefully, a desire to co-exist. At the same time, by sharing his knowledge of the area's rich cultural history, the thousands of "friends" who enjoy Joe's tours each year also gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the people who first called the national park *home*.

Much like his ancestors before him, Joe's near-lifelong work as a guide will undoubtedly take him on many more adventures - not the least of which is seeing his three nearly-grown children making their own journeys into the world. But as he continues to uncover and connect with his family's history, he knows that invariably, his voyage will lead him back to the river. "The river is like the blood in my veins. We've been here for that long." ∞

To learn more about Jasper Tour Co. visit jaspertourcompany.com, call 780-852-7070 or email info@jaspertourcompany.com



Joe (right) and his cousin Darrell Fosseneuve (left) in front of the Captain Shott exhibit at the Royal Alberta Museum

A Rocky Start to Great Adventure

How Keith Diakiw followed a wandering path to his dreams

BY GABRIEL GAUTHIER



From exploring on camping trips to finding unexpected treasures on the sidewalk, rocks of different shapes, colours, and textures often captivate the minds of curious children. Some follow this wonder into adulthood, pursuing their passion more seriously.

Métis entrepreneur, Keith Diakiw is one of those people. “Growing up, I used to go on full day weekend rock collecting excursions around my hometown of Hinton with my yellow and black BMX bike, along with my backpack and my dad’s bricklaying hammer while exploring all the different

outcrops, gravel pits, and creek beds by myself,” Keith recalls fondly.

In grade six, when a friend talked about attending university, Keith realized his fascination with rocks could be a career. He could be a geologist.

“From that point on, I took my academics seriously and started working harder in school to bring my marks up to eventually compete against the smartest students in class to earn the marks to be accepted into university,” he explains.

Keith finished his education with degrees in Physical



Geography, Anthropology, and Geology from the University of Alberta. Between degrees, he also joined the Royal Canadian Navy in 2001. In 2007, he became a qualified firefighter, later becoming part of a nine-member rescue team in 2012. He participated in fire-fighting efforts in both the 2011 Slave Lake and 2016 Fort McMurray wildfires. Like many people he knew, Keith also

worked for several years in the oil & gas industry. When that came to an end, he knew it was time to start *Talking Rock Tours* (TRT).

“It has been something gnawing at the back of my mind since my University of Alberta days. When I was suddenly let go from working in the oil sands during the last downturn with over decade of loyal service, it was then, I made the decision to go for it,” Keith explains.

TRT offers five different Alberta-based tours. These experiences range in difficulty, from lengthy hikes to wandering walks with activities varying from fossil collecting to canoeing. Keith crafts his offerings so there is a tour for everyone and continues to plan new and exciting tour options for the 2019 season.

The TRT business plan was conceived in 2017 at a microbusiness training camp. After building everything in 2018, from the logo to the website, Keith is now ready to start operations in the 2019 tourist season.

“Our ‘Geo-Explorers’ will find themselves inspired on many levels once they fully appreciate what they are about to see and experience because every rock and stone has a story to tell,” he says.

But what makes TRT special isn’t just the tours. It focuses on the voices and stories of Canada’s Indigenous people. Keith incorporates Indigenous stories during his tours so he can talk about not only the geologic history, but also the Indigenous history.

As a Métis, Keith takes great pride in his Indigenous culture.

For a while, this identity was an abstract concept to him. He knew he was distantly related to a historical figure, but he didn’t realize it was Gabriel Dumont until he started the process of applying for Métis Nation of Alberta citizenship. After Keith learned of his family connections to the Métis Nation, he knew he had to do something to support his community. Creating Indigenous tourism opportunities is just one of the ways he contributes; He sees Indigenous tourism as vital for many reasons.

“Historically, it is another venue to

set the record straight and teach others the history of our land that is missing from our mainstream education thus far. Personally, it gives Indigenous people, like me, a chance to learn more about our culture and history, as well as a strong sense of pride to then share it with the world about who we are. Publicly, it provides a new genre of important tours for those interested in authentic and cultural experiences,” Keith explains.

While Keith shares unique experiences with TRT, the challenges have been numerous. Like many startup companies, finding the money to support the business has been hard. Several tours Keith plans to offer require a

“It is another venue to set the record straight and teach others the history of our land...”

reliable tour van, meaning expensive upkeep. Despite these challenges, he continues to push forward towards his dream.

Keith encourages Indigenous people wanting to share their stories, to contact him so, together, they can find the best way to share the Indigenous history of the land.

Come the 2019 tourism season, Keith will be ready to share his passion for geology and Indigenous history with you on one of his many TRT tours.

“I am really excited and a bit scared in chasing my dream of promoting the earth sciences and local Indigenous history of our land.” ∞

To learn more about Talking Rock Tours and their 2019 season offerings, visit talkingrocktours.com, or contact Keith at 780-298-7992 or info@talkingrocktours.com



Trail Blazers

Indigenous tour company taking the mountains by storm

BY OLIVIA CONDON

Blend Indigenous culture, mountain hikes, herbal medicine and what do you have?

For Brenda Holder, it has been the recipe for a successful and unique business.

Brenda started her tour company, Mahikan Trails in 2000. Mahikan (L"Δb") is Cree for Wolf. Tired of working for someone else, she left her job with the British military and took a leap of faith to teach people about her Métis culture in Alberta's premier tourism destination; The Rocky Mountains.

Born and raised in Jasper, Alberta, Brenda has been drawn to the outdoors since childhood. Learning about nature's gifts of medicine through her grandmother, she developed a keen appreciation for the physical world and a desire to share her passion.

Brenda started by offering daily half and full-day interpretive medicine walks in the summer months. From there she grew her business to offer a myriad of programs, and in 2010 she began working closely with her sister Tracey Klettli who owns her own tour and training company; Painted Warriors.

Mahikan offers wilderness and remote first-aid classes as well as a

plant medicine first-aid course. Brenda continues offering her medicine walk on Saturday's in the summer and with the help of her nephew, Jordan, introduced a winter ghost tour to Bankhead in early 2019.

This new addition is, round-trip, a five kilometre walk to Banff's longest-running abandoned mining town, Bankhead. The inaugural run, in early February 2019, was a family affair with Brenda's nieces Callie and Morgan in attendance along with Jordan.

The hike starts at dusk, when the sunset hits the mountains, turning their peaks a dazzling orange and pink. By the end of the tour, the stars have come out.

Known as the 20-year-town, Bankhead was a coal mining settlement at Cascade Mountain from 1902 to 1922. Located on Lake Minnewanka Road, the area is steeped in the history of the Stoney Nakoda people.

During the tour, Mahikan guides regale hikers with stories of lake monsters, legends of hauntings, and the history of Minnewanka, meaning 'water of the spirits' in Nakoda. All these elements make for the perfect spooky nighttime walk in the mountains.

Brenda welcomes all her guests with traditional ceremonies and a prayer



in Cree. Teaching about her culture anchors the tour and has always been the goal of her business.

“It’s all about starting that conversation,” she says. “Being able to get creative not only with the programs we offer and the tours we produce but getting the opportunity to educate people, it’s a real blessing to showcase who Métis people are. For us, it’s quite important- as best we can- to greet guests wearing a [red river] sash or in the winter to wear our fur hats and talk about the trapping lineage in our family.”

Stopping along the trail to teach guests about the area’s plant life and its medicinal uses is where Brenda comes into her own. Her extensive knowledge helps paint the picture of life in the area in the early 20th century when ingenuity, discovery, and perseverance in herbal healing improved and saved lives.

Under the stars, Callie and Morgan map the sky, telling stories and legends of Earth’s creation in Indigenous cultures.

Recently, Brenda was approached by Banff and Lake Louise Tourism asking her to become a member of the organization as the first Indigenous

owned and operated tour company in their membership.

“We are so pleased to welcome Mahikan Trails as one of our new members,” said Angela Anderson, communications manager with Banff and Lake Louise Tourism. “The walking tours and experiences provided by Brenda Holder and her family are a unique – and very important – addition to the rich experiences offered in Banff and Lake Louise. For visitors who seek a deeper understanding of the history and culture of Banff National Park, Mahikan Trails is a must.”

Brenda is optimistic her tour and program numbers will continue to grow and is looking forward to exciting things to come.

“I think I’d like to be able to hire more Indigenous guides as well as having a home base for an office,” she says.

With culture, discovery, and Brenda’s electric personality at the helm of the company’s success, tourists to the region are in for a true Métis experience on Mahikan Trails. ∞

To learn more about Mahikan Trails and their 2019 season offerings visit mahikan.ca or call 403-679-8379.



Indigenous Tourism is Exploding!

According to Indigenous Tourism Alberta (ITA), Indigenous Tourism pumps \$166.2M into our economy annually and has grown 75% since 2014! Not only does it provide a livelihood to Indigenous people, but it builds cross-cultural awareness showcasing traditions and culture. Sharing culture is also key to preserving it. By building cultural understanding Indigenous people pass down history and tradition.

ITA encourages and promotes authentic Indigenous tourism showcasing unique and immersive experiences offered by its members. Recently, they held their first Summit on Indigenous Tourism at the River Cree Resort & Casino in Edmonton. Here are a couple pictures we took at the event. ∞



To learn more about other Indigenous Tourism experiences in Alberta, please visit: indigenoustourismalberta.ca

Bannock

(Recipe courtesy of Rupertsland Institute Métis Culture Cards)



PHOTO BY ANDREA FLECK

Ingredients:

- 4 1/2 cups flour
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2 cups tepid water
- 1 cup melted lard

Instructions:

1. Mix first three ingredients in a bowl
2. Make a well in the middle of the mixture
3. Add lard and water into well
4. Slowly mix from the middle
5. Knead about ten times
6. Flatten and pierce with a fork or spoon
7. Place in a lightly greased fry pan (cast iron is better)
8. Bake in oven at 450° F for 20 to 30 minutes and enjoy!

The Métis Nation of Alberta Announces New Métis Harvesting Agreement & Policy

Effective September 1, 2019

Important Note: Harvesting stickers/
cards will **NOT** be available until
September 1, 2019

Métis harvesting is an important topic for many Métis people throughout Alberta. While the Harvesting Agreement between the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) and the Government of Alberta (GoA) was signed on March 12, 2019, the MNA is still finalizing important components, such as the application process and will continue negotiations on some key items – such as harvesting rights for southern Alberta.

The new Métis Harvesting in Alberta Policy replaces the 2010 policy and recognizes the rights of eligible MNA citizens to hunt, fish, and trap for food in five large regional Métis Harvesting Areas in central and northern Alberta (as opposed to the much smaller 25 local Métis harvesting areas provided for in the 2010 policy).

The agreement also recognizes the MNA's authority to issue Métis Harvesting Identification Stickers. The stickers are to be affixed to the MNA citizenship cards of eligible individuals, indicating the Métis Harvesting Area(s) in which they may harvest. Further, the agreement establishes an Implementation Committee to review any issues related to the policy or Métis harvesting.

The Métis Nation of Alberta is very excited, through this agreement, to reaffirm its connection to the Métis Nation homeland and to continue its productive relationship with the Government of Alberta.

We understand there are many questions and concerns surrounding this topic. Please visit albertametis.com for information, updates, and a complete list of frequently asked questions (FAQs).



Frequently Asked Questions

When can I apply for my Métis Harvester Identification Sticker?

The effective date for this new system will be September 1, 2019. The MNA staff are working hard to ensure the proper systems, processes, and people are in place by September 1, 2019.

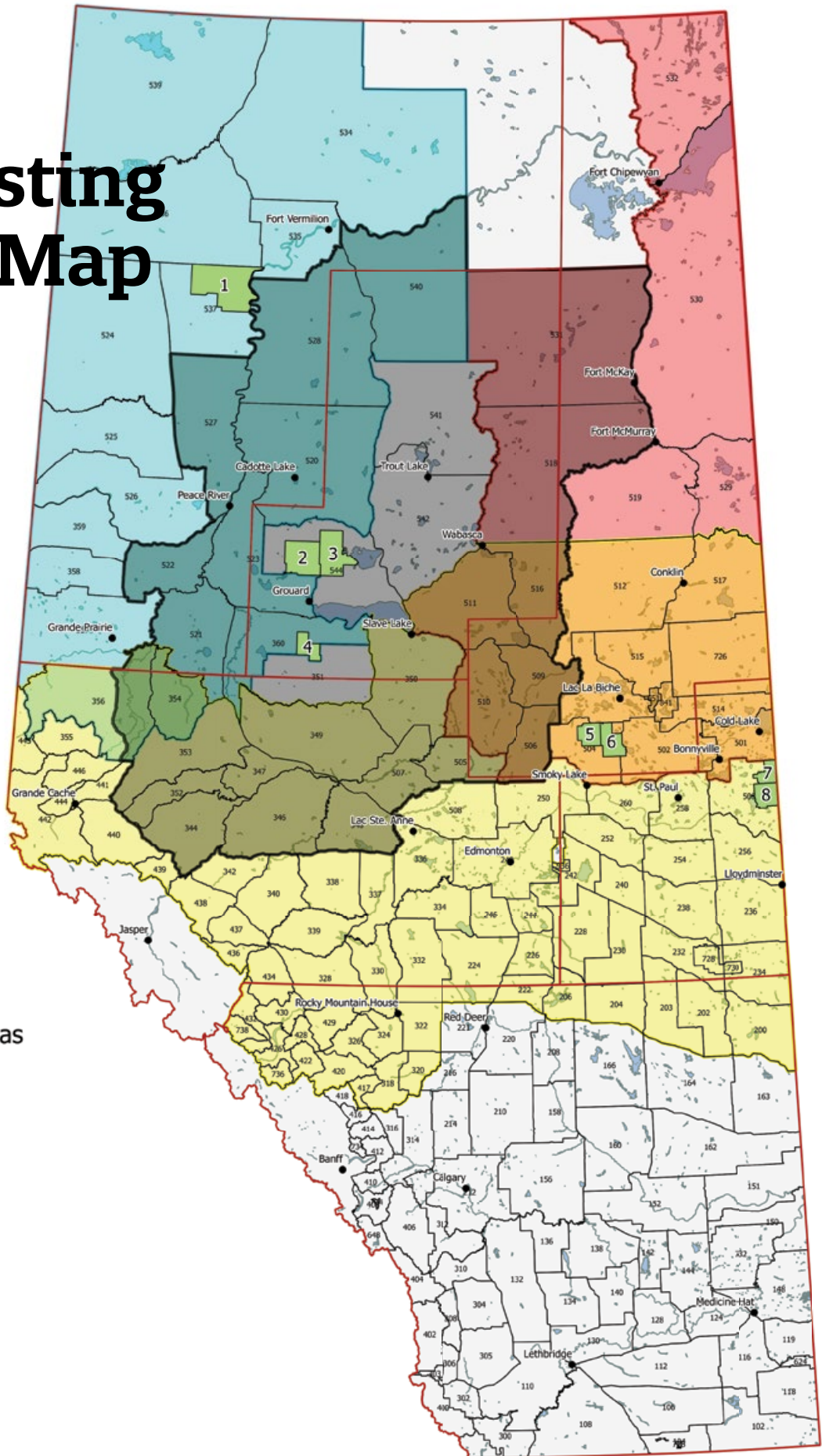
Where am I able to harvest?

Through your application process, you will have to show historical (pre-1900s) and contemporary connection to a defined Métis Harvesting Area. Please visit albertametis.com to see the Métis Harvesting Area maps.

Where do I get my Métis Harvester Identification Sticker? Can I apply with my local? My regional office?

Similar to the MNA citizenship application process, the Métis Harvester Identification Sticker application process will be based out of the provincial head office. Like the MNA citizen application process, teams will be travelling the province to facilitate easy applications. All current MNA citizens will have to go through this process, whereas new citizens applications will be able to apply for the Métis Harvester Identification Sticker simultaneously.

Métis Harvesting Areas Map



Harvesting Areas

- Area A
- Area B
- Area C
- Area D

Settlements

1. Paddle Prairie
2. Peavine
3. Gift Lake
4. East Prairie
5. Buffalo Lake
6. Kikino
7. Elizabeth
8. Fishing Lake

March 2019



SHARE YOUR STORY

Over the years we have had many inspiring, talented, and interesting citizens share their stories with us for the Otipemisiwak Magazine. We want to hear from you. Help us make this publication even better by sharing your stories, poetry, recipes, photography, and more. Email us at mna@metis.org to learn how you can contribute.

