



Government
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update

SUMMER 2003

News of interest to Aboriginal people
from the Government of Canada

Art shows off culture

Kevin McKenzie, an artist from the Cree and Métis Nations says art is his way to teach people about his culture.

"I want people to understand that I'm a First Nation person, and I want them to understand my culture, because I'm very proud of who I am."

Kevin has been painting since he was 13 years old. He says being an artist is having a vision, and having the confidence to follow it through.

"I'm working in a new medium, which is very challenging." Kevin works with a mould of a buffalo skull. "I take this sacred object, and then I re-introduce it," he says.

Kevin is one of many artists who takes part in the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)

Acquisition/Exhibition Program.

The program gives Aboriginal artists the chance to show and sell their work. A jury chooses the artists for the program.

The program is a part of INAC's Indian and Inuit Art Centres. The centres promote artists who use traditional and contemporary ways of making art, such as weaving, carving, printmaking, photography and sculpture.

The centres also have information on Aboriginal artists. There is an art library, an Inuit resource centre and a National Indian Art Collection with over 4000 works of art by Aboriginal artists.



Kevin McKenzie is proud of his Cree and Métis culture.

For more information on artists or how to be part of the Acquisition/Exhibition Program, call **1 800 567-9604** toll-free or visit www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/art on the Internet.

**Hey kids — looking for fun this summer?
Read a book!**

The *Aboriginal Book List for Children* gives the names of some books telling Aboriginal stories written for 4 to 14 year olds. For your *free* copy, call **1 800 567-9604** toll-free or email infopubs@ainc-inac.gc.ca.



Canada

Elders keep traditions alive



Elder Vera Martin teaches youth the importance of hard work.

Elder Vera Martin says one of the best things ever said about her was by other Elders. They said that Vera is a good worker.

Vera is an Anishinaabe Elder and a member of the Chippewas of Nawash First Nation in Ontario. She follows the teachings of the Three Fires Medewiwin or Ojibway Grand Medicine Society.

For Vera, age 69, working and helping others is important – a message she would tell youth.

"I would give them something to do. And I would teach them to help people," she says.

As an Elder, helping people is something Vera knows about. "I help people find their spirituality, clan, names—and their Indian-ness."

Vera loves her work. She has worked for many years helping others break their addictions. In the past, she was president and general manager of a construction company. She has also acted for television and film.

But she says that raising her eight children is one of the highlights of her life. She now has 20 grandchildren.

Another highlight was graduating with honours from Seneca College. There, she received a diploma in social work and was the only Aboriginal student.

"I'm an Indian, and I did it. That wasn't the expectation back then," she says.

Vera wants to see youth reach their goals and give back to their communities. This is how to keep traditions alive, Vera says.

Matrimonial real property study

After a couple breaks up, what happens to property they share, such as the home they live in?

Since there is no Canadian law which applies to the division of matrimonial real property on reserves, the Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights will study this problem. The Committee will listen to witnesses this Fall and may make recommendations on possible solutions.

To learn more about the issue, visit www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/index_e.html on the Internet and click on "After marriage breakdown – Information on the on-reserve matrimonial home."

Language — a key to culture

Did you know that more than 50 Aboriginal languages are spoken across Canada?

Even so, fewer people in Canada can speak an Aboriginal language than ever before.

Over the next 11 years, the Government of Canada will invest over \$172 million to protect and promote Aboriginal languages and cultures. Together with national Aboriginal organizations, the Department of Canadian Heritage will set up a task force of mostly Aboriginal people.

The task force will listen to your ideas about how to promote, protect and bring new life to Aboriginal languages and cultures. Then, it will recommend an Aboriginal group to oversee the preservation of languages and cultures.

Some of the money will continue to go to the Aboriginal Languages Initiative for two more years. Through the initiative, you can get help to learn or teach an Aboriginal language. Today, the initiative is run by the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Métis National Council. In 2004, a new Aboriginal languages and cultures centre will take over.

To find out more about what the government does to strengthen Aboriginal languages and cultures, visit www.canadianheritage.gc.ca on the Internet or call toll-free 1 866 811-0055.

Speak up!

Some Aboriginal languages have gained more speakers over the last five years. Languages being spoken more include:

- Dene
- Montagnais-Naskapi
- Oji-Cree
- Attikamekw
- Dakota/Sioux
- Mik'maq

Source: Census 2001



Joining the Canadian Forces

Have you ever thought about working as a soldier, a sailor, or a member of the Air Force?

You can enter the **Canadian Forces Aboriginal Entry Program**. This lets Aboriginal people see what military life is about before actually joining.

After graduating from the program, you may take Basic Recruit Training with the Regular Forces.

We talked to some Aboriginal recruits right before Recruit Training. Here's what they said:



"I had a difficult choice to make between the Canadian and US Forces. What helped me decide was the cultural aspect that the Canadian Forces recognizes. They're very respectful of Native cultures."

(Private Philip Kenneth Moore, Batchewana First Nation, Rankin Reserve, Ontario)

"Since I caused some grief in my early teens, I wanted to make my dad proud of me. And I wanted to be a better example for my younger brother. It's an honest way to make money."

(Private Leo James Giberson, Sioux Valley Dakota Nation, Manitoba)

"It was my day today to get picked on. Luckily, everybody gets their turn. It's good for morale. I'm proud of our teamwork and our success."

(Ordinary Seaman Joan Marie Paul, Indian Brook, Nova Scotia)



For more information on the Forces or the Aboriginal Entry Program, call toll-free **1 800 856-8488**, or visit **www.recruiting.forces.gc.ca** on the Internet.

Clean water

Over the next five years, the Government of Canada will spend **\$600 million** to make sure that water is safe to drink on reserves. This is called the **First Nations Water Management Strategy**.

The goal of the strategy is to keep drinking water clean and to have safe and well-run sewage systems. The government and First Nations people are working together to meet these standards.

The strategy includes:

- a plan to improve water systems;
- a program that monitors water quality; and
- more training programs for water operators.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada has already tested more than 740 water treatment systems on reserves across Canada. The results can be found in a report called "National Assessment of Water and Wastewater Systems in First Nations Communities."

To learn more about the strategy or to get a copy of the report, call **1 800 567-9604** toll-free. You can also get the report off the Internet at **www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/nr/prs**. Click on "May – August" under 2003 and then click on "National Assessment of Water and Wastewater Systems in First Nations Communities."

Keep those cards and letters coming!

Thanks to everyone who has filled out the reply cards. Keep the cards coming in!

You can mail your comment card in right away—it doesn't need a stamp. Fill out the comment card and let us know what you think.

Your ideas matter!

We would like to receive your comments and suggestions.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Did you find this issue informative? ☐ yes ☐ no

What other important topics would you like to see covered in future issues?

Comments: _____

☐ Send Government of Canada information to my email: _____

☐ Send *Update* to my friend at this address: _____

☐ It's okay to use my name and address for other government updates.

I would like to be kept informed on Government of Canada initiatives by:

☐ community television

☐ mail to my home

☐ band office

☐ community radio

☐ Internet

What's new with governance? Lots!

Thanks to First Nations people, Bill C-7, the proposed First Nations Governance Act, is changing.

First Nations people told the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Northern Development and Natural Resources how they wanted to modify the proposed bill.

They made many suggestions. The proposed bill is changing as a result of some things First Nations people said they need and want, including:

- stronger protection for Aboriginal and treaty rights;
- a smaller role for the Minister in community business;
- improved protection of individual rights by better by-law enforcement; and
- clear respect for Aboriginal cultures and traditions.

The Government of Canada is also recommending two important additions:

- a Canadian Centre for First Nations Governance, led by First Nations to help communities develop and put governance structures in place; and
- an Ombudsman to hear complaints from First Nation people.

Debate starts again in September when Parliament returns.

To find out more about the proposed bill, you can go to a information-sharing session or get an information package. Visit our special website at www.fng-gpn.gc.ca or call us toll-free at **1 800 550-1540**.

Protect against West Nile virus

West Nile virus season is here again. It is carried by infected mosquitos and can be serious for people of all ages. Although your chances of being bitten by an infected mosquito are low, you can take steps to prevent getting sick:

- wear light-coloured clothing;
- limit time outside at dawn and dusk;
- use mosquito repellents; and
- check door and window screens for holes.

You can also reduce mosquito breeding areas. Make sure there is no water collected in old tires, under flower pots, in children's toys or in other outdoor objects.

For more information, visit your Community Health Centre or nursing station, or go to the following website: www.westnilevirus.gc.ca.



Take action against West Nile virus! For more information, contact Health Canada at **1 800 816-7292**.



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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Complete the reply card, clip it out and send it in (postage is already paid) or call INAC Public Enquiries Contact Centre at **1-800-567-9604** or TTY/TDD: **1-866-553-0554**. You can also send us a fax at **(819) 953-2305**, or send us an email message at Update@inac.gc.ca.

For information on Government of Canada programs and services, call toll-free **1-800-O-Canada (1-800-622-6232)**; TTY/TDD at **1-800-465-7735**; or visit www.canada.gc.ca.

You can also read the *Update* at www.inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/index_e.html.

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www.inac.gc.ca

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