

# RECONCILIATION

## MIYO WECHETOTAN

MIYO (Me-yo) WECHETOTAN (We-chee-too-tan)

## T'AT'Q EŁCH'Į DANIDZĮ HA BASĮ EGHOLODA

T'AT'Q (Taan too) EŁCH'Į (Ale chann) DANIDZĮ (Daa knee junn)  
HA (Haa) BASĮ (Baa zinn) EGHOLODA (Eaa ghoo low daa)



## National Indigenous Peoples Day



Highlighting June's National Indigenous History Month, June 21, 2021 marks National Indigenous Peoples Day.

Proclaimed in 1996 by the federal government, following that year's release of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples report, National Indigenous Peoples Day is a time to honour Indigenous Peoples throughout Canada and in this region. The Day commemorates the histories, heritage, and cultures of Indigenous Peoples across the country.

Wood Buffalo is located within Treaty 8 territory, and the unceded lands of the Métis, and is home to the Cree, Dene and Métis peoples. As the original occupants of this land, National Indigenous Peoples day is an opportunity to recognize the strength and endurance of present-day Indigenous communities in Wood Buffalo. It is an important occasion to promote ongoing cultural awareness and education of Canadian-Indigenous history in the region on the continuing path to reconciliation.

Last year, on June 20, 2020, National Indigenous Peoples Day saw the launch of this Newsletter, *Reconciliation*, resulting from the October 2019 Truth and Reconciliation Sharing Circle events. One year later and we continue to be honoured to share information about reconciliation in Wood Buffalo and how you can get involved. Mayor Scott read a Proclamation on National Indigenous Peoples Day at the June 8, 2021 Council Meeting.

To view previous editions of *Reconciliation* or to take our free online Indigenous Awareness eLearning courses, please visit [www.rmwb.ca/trc](http://www.rmwb.ca/trc). The Municipality encourages all residents to take the modules online and learn about how you can contribute to reconciliation in Wood Buffalo – on National Indigenous Peoples Day and year-round.

## National Indigenous History Month



The Municipality is proud to honour National Indigenous History Month in June, in partnership with local Indigenous governments, organizations, and individuals.

Throughout June, Canadians recognize National Indigenous History Month to honour the diversity of Indigenous Peoples, the Indigenous way of knowing, and the shared history amongst us all.

This month offers important ways to recognize the historic contributions of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples and the challenges they have experienced in Canada. At the May 25, 2021 Council meeting, Mayor Don Scott announced a Proclamation declaring June National Indigenous History Month in the RMWB. The Mayor noted the month as a time for learning about and appreciating the many contributions of Indigenous Peoples as the original peoples of this land.

“This is a special time to share and learn from stories, traditions, and cultures in ways that keep us connected to the land and one another,” said Indigenous and Rural Relations Director Dennis Fraser. “Despite the ongoing pandemic, it is an opportunity to recognize the strength of present-day Indigenous communities and their resiliency in maintaining their languages and cultures, in the face of colonial impacts,” Fraser continued.

During June, the Municipality's social media channels are featuring stories, photos, and videos shared by Indigenous community members. Each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday in June, new content is shared under the themes Mother Earth Mondays, Wisdom Wednesdays, and Fact Fridays, to raise awareness and promote understanding of Indigenous Peoples in the region.

To learn more about National Indigenous History Month and how you can participate, please go to [RMWB.ca/NIHM](http://RMWB.ca/NIHM).



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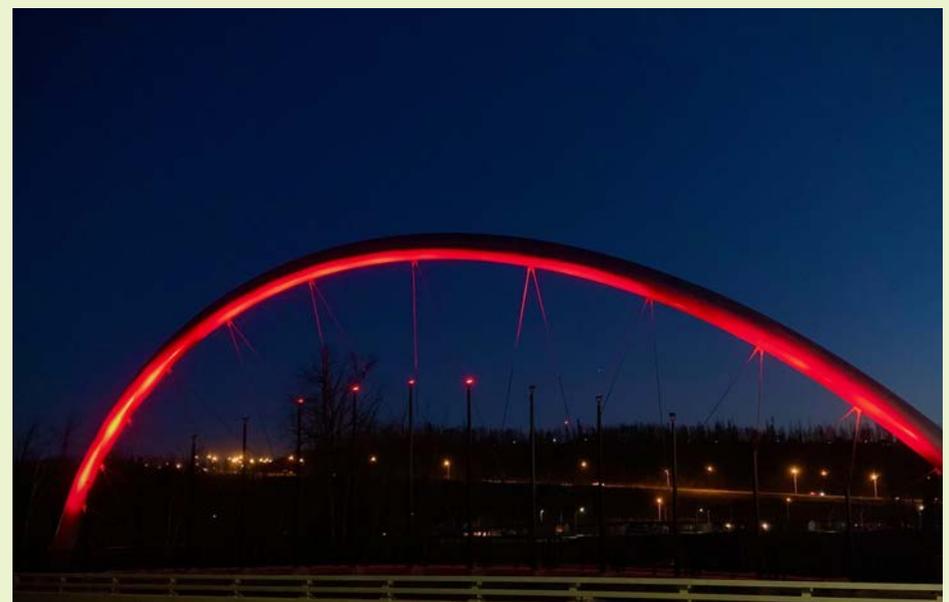


# National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit+ People

## National Day of Awareness



**MMIWG2S**



Saline Creek Bridge (Waterways) in Fort McMurray lit in on red May 5, 2021 in honour of the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit+ People

**May 5, 2021 marked a critically important day of commemoration in the region and across the country.**

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) was honoured to stand with all those who are advocating for urgent and collective action on what is a national tragedy.

“Violence against Indigenous women and girls is systemic and a national crisis that requires urgent, informed and collaborative action,” said Mayor Scott, as he announced the Municipality’s Proclamation on the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit+ People at an April 27 Council meeting.

Red is the official color of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit+ People Campaign and is significant within Indigenous belief systems, as the only color ancestors and spirits can see. In remembrance, hope, and honour, the RMWB lit the Saline Creek Bridge (Waterways) in red on the evening of May 5. A citizen placed a red dress on the tree in front of the RMWB Jubilee Building in Fort McMurray, and a red dress cut-out created by the Athabasca Tribal Council (ATC) was also published in the *Fort McMurray Today* to further raise awareness in recognition of this solemn occasion.

Partnering with several local organizations and the RMWB, on May 5, the Athabasca Tribal Council hosted a Facebook Live event to bring awareness to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit People in Wood Buffalo. With a discussion panel of community leaders and organizations, the event included a question and answer period and a video from Mayor Scott. The full event, including the Mayor’s video, is available at [https://fb.watch/5MQcjcB\\_zj/](https://fb.watch/5MQcjcB_zj/).



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## Indigenous and Rural Relations' Virtual Indigenous Speaker Series — National Bestselling Author Jesse Thistle



**The RMWB introduced its inaugural event in the Indigenous Speaker Series: 'It's Time to Talk' on May 27.**

Featuring an interactive discussion with Jesse Thistle, celebrated author of the national bestseller, *From the Ashes: My Story of Being Métis, Homeless and Finding My Way*, the Indigenous and Rural Relations department was proud to host this interactive, virtual dialogue.

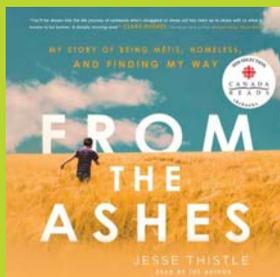
A strong Indigenous rights advocate, York University Métis Studies Assistant Professor, and Métis Cree PhD candidate, *From the Ashes* is a memoir that chronicles Thistle's experiences with, homelessness, addiction and trauma. Published in 2019, *From the Ashes* was also a finalist for CBC Canada Reads, and won the Kobo Emerging Writer Prize for Nonfiction. Jesse is also the recipient of an Indigenous Voices Award and a High Plains Book Award.

Thistle, who advocates for an Indigenous understanding of homelessness, is also the National Representative for Indigenous Homelessness for the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. He is currently working on theories of intergenerational and the historical trauma of Métis people. At the event, Jesse discussed dimensions of Indigenous Homelessness, work he undertook through the Observatory, noting the dispossession of Indigenous Peoples from the land as a major contributing factor, amongst others.

"We were thrilled to have such a renowned author as Jesse Thistle as the very first presenter in our Indigenous Speaker Series," said Janine Kruse, Manager of Indigenous and Rural Relations. "The Series will raise awareness of Indigenous history, experiences, and culture, and we're very much looking forward to hosting more events soon," Kruse said.

'It's Time to Talk,' a free, interactive series highlighting the voices of Indigenous artists, writers, activists, and leaders will provide powerful examples of strength and the positive impacts one individual can have. The Indigenous Speaker Series offers participants opportunities to learn, understand, and engage on important issues like homelessness, addiction, intergenerational trauma, and reconciliation.

The event featured a question-and-answer session, and participants were encouraged to submit questions ahead of time to Participate Wood Buffalo. Indigenous and Rural Relations is busy working to schedule future Series events and is always looking for ideas. To offer Series ideas, please email Indigenous and Rural Relations at [trc@rmwb.ca](mailto:trc@rmwb.ca).



Jesse Thistle, author of the national bestseller,  
*From the Ashes: My Story of Being Métis,  
Homeless and Finding My Way*



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Saline Creek Bridge (Waterways) in Fort McMurray lit in Orange in honour and recognition of the loss of 215 children found at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School

# Honouring the 215 Children Lost at the Former Kamloops Indian Residential School

## Indigenous Awareness, Truth and Reconciliation

The discovery in Kamloops presented a tragic reminder of the legacy of residential schools and the impacts that colonialism and systemic racism have had.

This is a truth that has been known in Indigenous communities, including here in Wood Buffalo, for over 100 years, impacting every Indigenous person in Canada.

Mayor Don Scott issued the following statement on the tragic discovery:

“When we discuss truth and reconciliation, it’s important to note that truth comes first. For reconciliation to take place we must first acknowledge the truth. I encourage residents of this region to also do this work to learn and understand. The journey to truth and reconciliation is far from over. In fact, in many ways it has only just begun. But every journey begins with the first few steps. This is our opportunity to take a step.”

In honour of these lost 215 children, at 2:15 pm on Monday May 31, 2021, RMWB Chief Administrative Officer, Jamie Doyle, directed staff to pause operations, services, and activities across the organization in a moment of remembrance for the children and their families. Flags are being flown at half-mast at all Municipal buildings, and the Saline Creek Bridge will be lit in orange throughout most of June, all in recognition of the 215 lost children.

“These are symbolic acts, and sadness and grief is not nearly enough. We must turn the grief we feel into real action. We must do better to find and acknowledge the truth and seek reconciliation with those who have been immeasurably harmed,” said the Mayor

The RMWB is committed to strengthening its relationships with Indigenous Peoples, who are so integral to the region and a fundamental part of our communities. Through our reconciliation work and beyond, we will continue to learn and understand the atrocities that Indigenous Peoples have endured and how this has so devastatingly impacted their families and communities — to collectively heal and move forward together in reconciliation.

The RMWB is steadfast in its commitment and pledge to reconciliation and the important role each of us has in advancing this process in the region with Indigenous Peoples and communities.

There are many other things you can do to understand and support Indigenous Peoples and cultures in the region and contribute individually to reconciliation. Every June, for National Indigenous History Month, we celebrate the diverse history, languages and cultures of Indigenous Peoples. It is especially important now to take the time to continue to educate ourselves and future generations by learning more about the Indian residential school system and the truth about what took place.

To access resources on truth and reconciliation, learn about the work the RWMB is doing with Indigenous partners, and find out how you can personally contribute to reconciliation in Wood Buffalo, please visit [rmwb.ca/trc](http://rmwb.ca/trc). Information from the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation can be accessed at [nctr.ca](http://nctr.ca).