



REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY  
OF WOOD BUFFALO

# RECONCILIATION

## MIYO WECHETOTAN

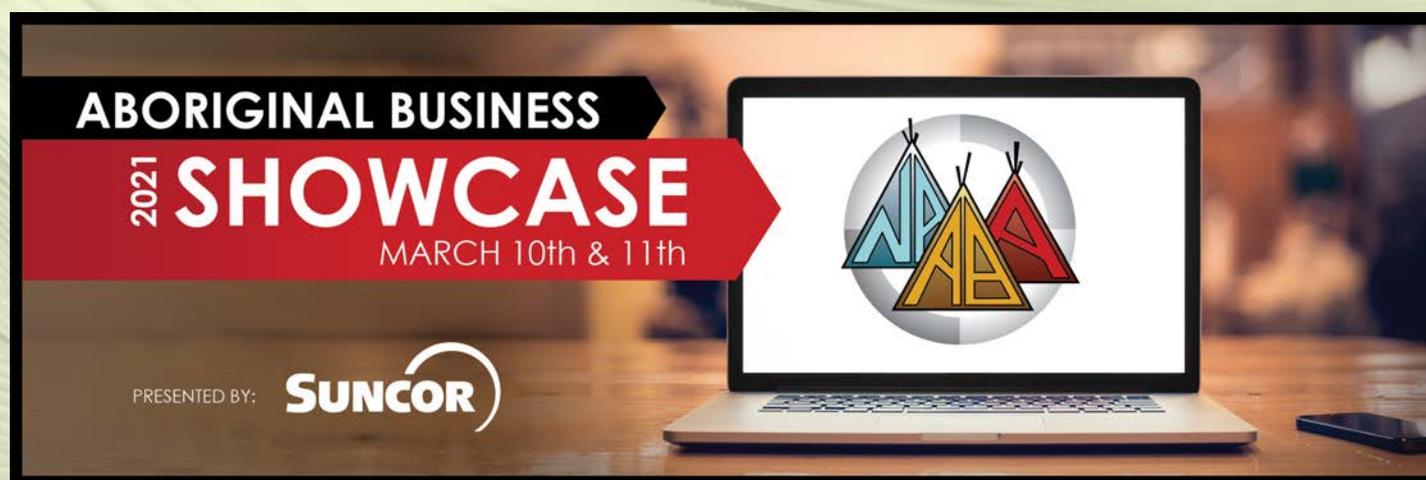
MIYO (Me-yo) WECHETOTAN (We-chee-too-tan)

## 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)



# Northeastern Alberta Aboriginal Business Association Showcase



**On March 10 and 11, 2021, the Northeastern Alberta Aboriginal Business Association (NAABA) held its 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Aboriginal Business Showcase.**

Staff from the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo's (RMWB) Indigenous and Rural Relations (IRR) Department were pleased to attend the virtual event and present on Truth and Reconciliation in the Municipality.

A prayer song in Cree from traditional dancer, facilitator and storyteller, Adrian LaChance, was just one of the event's highlights. The Showcase featured a presentation from The Right Honourable Paul Martin, Former Prime Minister of Canada, about the Indige-

nous economy and the importance of community entrepreneurship, amongst many other distinguished speakers.

Beginning with a land acknowledgement recognizing Treaty 8 Territory, the traditional lands of the Cree, Dene, and the unceded territory of the Métis, Janine Kruse, IRR Manager, and Department Director, Dennis Fraser, presented on several key Reconciliation themes.

Featured in the presentation was a video vignette from Elder Alice Martin, stressing that the time is now to take action, continuing to work together, to ensure Reconciliation remains a top priority.

Framed by the idea and emblem of 'It's Time,' (this Newsletter's logo), Ms. Kruse noted that the concept of time

enables us to ask ourselves, within a reconciliation framework, "What is the truth about the past, what action can we take today, and how can we continue to work together to advance Reconciliation and restore and strengthen relationships for a better future?"

With the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's ten principles of reconciliation as a foundation, the RMWB strongly believes the framework will guide the organization in its commitments to Indigenous Peoples and communities to advance truth and reconciliation in the region.

More information about the Aboriginal Business Showcase can be found at <https://naaba.ca/>.



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## National Indigenous Languages Day

Since 1993, Indigenous Peoples in Canada have celebrated National Indigenous Languages Day to acknowledge the importance of language and culture to the well-being and resilience of Indigenous communities.

On Wednesday March 31, 2021, the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, Fort Chipewyan Métis Association, and Mikisew Cree First Nation hosted a virtual National Indigenous Languages Day celebration. The Athabasca Tribal Council and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) partnered with the three communities to hold the event. The celebration honoured the strength and endurance of Indigenous languages and cultures in Wood Buffalo, and around the world.

Indigenous languages local to the region – Cree and Dene. The event showcased local Indigenous language teachers, working to revitalize and sustain traditional Indigenous languages, offering all participants an opportunity to learn words in Cree and Dene. Language lessons were recorded and will be made available on social media. An Indigenous Language Learners Sharing Circle, offering a place to share experiences and efforts to preserve and strengthen Indigenous languages was also a part of this unique celebration.

The next edition of the Reconciliation newsletter will feature a follow-up article on the National Indigenous Languages Day celebrations.



METIS LOCAL 125  
FORT CHIPEWYAN  
ALBERTA

Loss of Indigenous languages is one of the most important and pressing issues Indigenous Peoples and communities face today, making the need to promote, revitalize, and strengthen Indigenous languages more critical than ever.

Language is fundamental and central to identity, preservation of culture, worldview, expression of self-determination, and is critical to reconciliation.

The event's opening ceremonies featured recordings of Elders in Cree and Dene, and a video of Mayor Don Scott welcoming all participants in both



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MIKISEW CREE  
FIRST NATION



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## Calling Local Indigenous Artists for Council Chambers Artwork Project



**As part of its ongoing commitment to reconciliation, the RMWB is commissioning a local Indigenous artist, or artist team, to create an artwork for Council Chambers, displaying the rich cultures of the region's Indigenous Peoples.**

Stemming from a June 2019 Council resolution, the selected artwork piece will recognize the critical importance of reconciliation to Indigenous Peoples, the Municipality, and the broader Wood Buffalo community, mediated through artistic expression.

“Art has a vital role to play in bringing to light community stories and histories, building meaningful relationships, and fostering a sense of pride

and belonging to a place, said Deanne Bergey, Director of RMWB Community & Protective Services. “It is our sincere hope this process will allow for an exchange of cultural knowledge and dialogue, traditional storytelling, and will embrace a deeper discussion on reconciliation as related to art,” added Dennis Fraser, IRR Director for the Municipality.

The Municipality asked for First Nations and Métis communities and organizations to appoint Knowledge Keepers to support this initiative and select the lead artist, or artist team. Knowledge Keepers, along with the selected artist(s), will then form a Sharing Circle to ensure the voices and perspectives

of Indigenous Peoples are equitably infused into the artwork's design and will allow for a deeper discussion on reconciliation as related to artistic expression.

Knowledge Keepers will work with the selected artist to approve the design prior to fabrication, which is scheduled to be installed in Council Chambers this fall.

Further information, including access to the artist call, is available on IRR's website at <https://www.rmwb.ca/en/indigenous-and-rural-relations/truth-and-reconciliation.aspx>.



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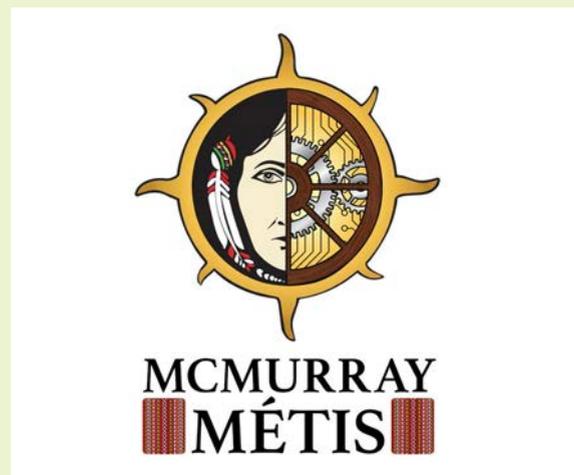
## Tawâw Housing First Partnership



**On January 12, 2021, RMWB Council allocated more than \$1.1 million from the 2020–2021 Community Plan on Homelessness to Wood Buffalo Wellness Society for the Tawâw housing project.**

A tri-party Partnership between Wood Buffalo Wellness Society (WBWS), McMurray Métis, and Wood Buffalo Housing (WBH), the initiative will create access to 22 beds for homeless Indigenous individuals and families. Partnership funding comes from the Federal government as part of the second round of COVID-19 funding for the Reaching Home initiative.

The Tawâw (meaning “Come in, Welcome” in Cree) Housing First Partnership will establish the RMWB as a leader in addressing homelessness, including amongst Indigenous Peoples, drawing on the expertise,



experience, and networks of three established community organizations.

Units owned by WBH will be converted into transitional and supportive housing spaces, and services will cluster under the leadership of McMurray Métis and the WBWS to serve residents. As self-sufficiency is achieved, residents will transition to other nearby WBH units as they continue to access services and support others on the path to wellness.

“I want to thank our partners for coming together to develop a program that will keep our most vulnerable population safe during this pandemic while bringing us closer to achieving our goal to eliminate chronic homelessness in our region,” said Mayor Don Scott.

Joy Flett, Chair of the Municipality’s Homelessness Initiatives Strategic Committee, added that “The Tawâw



Housing First Partnership creates a unique, culturally sensitive environment to assist residents transitioning from lives of addiction, intergenerational trauma, impaired educational and employment outcomes, marginalization and hopelessness into a place of support, dignity, structure, community and cultural pride.”

The Reaching Home initiative is a community-based program aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness, directly funding communities across Canada to support their efforts in developing local solutions to homelessness.

Visit the RMWB website: [rmwb.ca/homelessness](http://rmwb.ca/homelessness) for more information on addressing housing and homelessness in our region.