

Braided Journeys presents the “Turtle Island Series – Daily Facts promoting Indigenous History, Culture & Contributions”

1. ***Please post the following on your screen:***

Turtle Island Series – Daily Facts promoting Indigenous History, Culture & Contributions

The Cree word for Edmonton is amiskwaciy-wâskahikan, means Beaver Hill House. The Niitsitapi and Nakota words for the region are kaghik-stak-etomo and chaba hei, respectively.

Historically, the Beaver Hills region was important for the Tsuut’ina (Sarcee), Nehiyawak (Cree), Anishnaabe (Saulteaux), the Nakota Sioux, and the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot).

Please share: The Edmonton region’s dense forests, open plains, rivers and lakes offered many resources for different Nations to rest and replenish their stores through hunting, gathering and fishing. The abundance of rich resources in the region made it an important place to rest during long voyages between the hills and the prairies, which happened each spring and fall. Activity in the region dates back to over 8,000 years ago. 200 Indigenous campsites and tool making sites have been found by archaeologists within the region.

2. Each First Nation has their own language, laws, traditions, customs and spiritual beliefs. Canada was named after the Algonquin word Kanata meaning settlement. Many First Nations can be heard referring to Canada as Turtle Island. This is in reference to the Creation Story of how the earth was formed on the turtle’s back. People around the world, including First Nations, have their own creation beliefs. “Creation Stories articulated who they are, how they got to the place they live, how they relate to others and why they are here. Most describe a Creator who created humans with a set of gifts”. (Indspire: Climbing the Mountain Resource, 2021).

To listen to a clip of a Cree Creation Story (Gr 7-12):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6c7USFunns>

3. The Circle is a Sacred Symbol of Indigenous Nations around the world- In First Nation spirituality the circle is everywhere – the medicine wheel, meetings and gatherings are held in circles, dances go in circles, drums are round, as are sweat lodges and tipis. The circle is the symbol of the cycle of all forms of life, in the circle we are equal and connected.
4. The American Constitution is based on the principles of the Great Law of Haudenosaunee Confederacy. The Haudenosaunee (which we also call Six Nations) have traditional territory that span across Quebec, New York, Wisconsin, and Ontario. “The Great Law of Haudenosaunee Confederacy is credited as being a contributing influence on the American Constitution, due to Benjamin Franklin’s great respect for the Haudenosaunee system of government, which in itself is interesting from the perspective that the United States formed their Constitution not on the principles of European governments”. (Indigenous Corporate Training Inc).

5. Where did Dreamcatchers come from? First, one could argue that dreamcatchers are one of the most popular and marketable First Nations craft item now sold around the world. The origins of the dreamcatcher come from the Ojibway people. There are also some oral stories shared by the Lakota. The Ojibway story of the dreamcatcher is that it comes from Spider Woman, who would web these dreamcatchers and hang them above a baby's cradle board while the infant was sleeping.

The dreamcatchers were made of willow, sinew, beads and feathers. The little opening at the centre of the web allowed the good dreams to pass through and filter down through the feathers hanging from the dreamcatcher, and into the dreaming minds of the children. When constructing the dreamcatcher, there is significance to the number of points where the sinew was wrapped around the willow circle (or tear drop shape). The first dreamcatcher was said to have eight points for the eight legs of the spider. Later, other versions included seven points for the seven grandfathers or the seven prophecies; 13 points as signifying the moons and 28 points for the lunar months. Over time, things about the dreamcatcher have changed like the materials used. (AMMSA article, 2001).

Can Non-Indigenous people make them? Yes, it is encouraged to learn about First Nations cultures especially if taught by Indigenous people who have these teachings. To make a dreamcatcher as just a craft, loses its spiritual significance. Should non-Indigenous people sell them? If made by an Indigenous artist Yes, If not, No, this is called cultural appropriation.

6. The invention of ice hockey has roots to the ice games played by First Nations out East. The Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia have been credited with the original design and manufacturing of the first ice hockey stick. In addition, hundreds of years ago, Jesuit priests wrote about the Mohawks playing with a stick and a piece of frozen ice embedded with mud and stones. According to the Jesuit journals, when a player was struck by the "puck" they yelled "Aukie!" meaning, ouch. The game was not called hockey in Canada until metal was added to the bottom of skates. Over 60 NHL players have been Indigenous including names like: Carey Price. Ethan Bear, Reggie Leach, Jordin Tootoo & Theo Fleury. (Birthplace of Hockey: <https://www.birthplaceofhockey.com/origin/original-equipment/micmacstx/>)
7. Who are the Metis & where do they live? Most Metis do not live on one of the 8 Metis settlements found in Alberta. The Metis Nation of Alberta is the governing body for Metis people in Alberta and have the authority of who can call themselves Metis citizens. There are 6 Metis Regions across Canada and Edmonton is in Region 4. Watch the video on "Who Are the Metis?" (7mins) <https://youtu.be/YvullRnPE3Y>
8. The language of the Metis is called Michif which is a combination of French nouns and Cree verbs and is spoken by Metis in the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario and in the South Slave region of the Northwest Territories. Some Metis people now call themselves Michif people. St. Albert's Michif Cultural Connections hosts free weekly online meetings where people can learn to speak Michif. To learn more about the Metis,

St. Albert's Musée Héritage Museum also hosts online exhibitions and events. A little known fact, Terry Fox was Métis.

9. Wherever there is water, there is an indigenous watercraft. Mostly, this is in the form of a Canoe ranging from 3m to over 30m in length, Canoes throughout history have been made from logs, animal skins and tree bark and were used for basic transportation, trade, and in some instances, for war. The design of the original canoe varied, depending on its use and where it was built. The Canoe was utilised on a much wider scale. From the Native American tribes to the Polynesians, the canoe enjoyed a variety of scales and uses. Here in Edmonton, the North Saskatchewan was used as a main route of travel for the First Nations and Métis. Can you imagine when you had to travel upstream to your destinations? What a workout!

10. Indigenous contributions to medicine - Indigenous peoples have identified and shared over 400 different species of plants (as well as lichens, fungi and algae) with medicinal applications. Medicine traditions — the plants used, the ailments treated, protocols for harvesting and application, and modes of preparation — are similar for Indigenous peoples across the country.

When Europeans and other newcomers arrived in Canada, they quickly learned about and adopted many of the plant medicines used by Indigenous peoples. One famous example is how French explorer Jacques Cartier and his crew, suffering from scurvy when they were overwintering at Stadacona (now Quebec City) in 1536, were saved by local Haudenosaunee. The Haudenosaunee brought them a coniferous tree (which Cartier named “tree of life”) and told them how to prepare it as a medicine. Source:

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/native-medicines>

11. Indigenous origins of Lacrosse - Before it was called lacrosse, the Algonquin called the sport baggataway and the Iroquois called it tewaarathon. Legend has it that it was named lacrosse by French settlers who thought that the stick looked like the staff carried by their Bishops at church, called a crozier. In French, the crozier is called a crosse. The settlers watched the Indigenous people playing their game and called it “la crosse.”

Roots: Exploring the History of Lacrosse (watch till 3:50)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JxM5mcuCR8M>

12. There are over 634 recognized First Nations Bands in Canada, roughly half of which are in the provinces of Ontario and British Columbia. The First Nations bands closest to Edmonton are Enoch Cree Nation, the Nakoda Sioux communities of Paul Band, Alexander and Alexis. The Mohawk community of Michel First Nation by Calahoo and the Papaschase First Nation in Edmonton were First Nations communities that had their land enfranchised by the government.
13. Indigenous Peoples in Canada have fought on the front line of every major battle Canada has been involved in and have done so with valour and distinction. It is estimated that 7,000 First Nations People served in the First and Second World Wars, and the Korean War; in addition to an unknown number of Métis, Inuit and non-Status Indians also served.

Many Indigenous men brought valuable skills with them when they joined the military. Patience, stealth and marksmanship were well-honed traits for those who had come from communities where hunting was a cornerstone of daily life. These attributes helped many of these soldiers become successful snipers and reconnaissance scouts. One unique example using a First Nations language to be a "code talker." For example, Mohawk, Ojibway and Cree languages were used to send messages. Men like Charles Checker Tompkins of Alberta translated sensitive radio messages into Cree so they could not be understood if they were intercepted by the enemy. Another Cree-speaking "code talker" would then translate the received messages back into English so they could be understood by the intended recipients.

What is also important to know is that at the time First Nations (status Indians) were exempt from conscription. Status Indians were not considered "citizens" of Canada and did not have the right to vote. In addition, First Nations had been assured during treaty negotiations, that they would not be involved in British battles.

Despite this, First Nations chose to enlist and fight for Canada. First Nations soldiers returned from war enfranchised under the Indian Act, which meant that when they returned they no longer had their Indian status and could no longer re-enter their previous lives. Indigenous veterans also did not have the right to obtain other benefits available to non-Indigenous veteran. It was not until 1995, fifty years after the Second World War that Indigenous Peoples were allowed to lay Remembrance Day wreaths at the National War Memorial to remember and honour their dead comrades. Source: <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/indigenous-veterans#:~:text=At%20the%20time%20of%20the,have%20the%20right%20to%20vote.>

14. Most of Canada's 65,000 Inuit live in 51 communities spread across the Inuvialuit Region (Northwest Territories), Nunavut, Nunavik (Northern Quebec), and Nunatsiavut (Northern Labrador). We call this vast region Inuit Nunangat. It encompasses roughly 35 percent of Canada's landmass and 50 percent of its coastline.
15. Inuit inventions - For hunting, the Inuit invented the harpoon, which was used to hunt seals and whales. They invented the kayak known as qajaqs, which allowed for one man to use for hunting the ocean and move among the pack ice. Inuit also created qamutiks, or dogsleds. Indigenous people of the north also created their own snow goggles, long before the invention of eyeglasses. Snow goggles, fashioned from a strip of bone, wood or other material, with a slit cut into it, greatly reduced glare and protected eyes from injury. Pretty important as long periods in a bright sunny day on the snow could mean you risk snow blindness, a sunburn on your cornea from reflected ultraviolet light. How does ingenious technology work? The slit focuses the light, much as a pinhole camera does. As a result, far-off objects appear sharper and the eye remains protected.
16. Rubbing noses is not an Inuit form of kissing - Inuit do not rub noses in order to kiss, but they do use a slightly different form of this gesture to greet their significant others, children and parents. This greeting involves pressing the nose and upper lip against the skin (commonly on the cheeks or forehead) and breathing in, causing the loved one's skin or hair to be suctioned against the

nose and upper lip. This act is known as kunik. To see an example of kunik (1:10) watch the following video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gB4POB5gTOU>

17. Inuit armor - When you hear the word armor, you probably envision knights protected by steel. The Inuit hand crafted armor out of raw leather straps and bone plates, which was usually made from bones and teeth, like walrus teeth or ivory. This design, enabled hunters needed protection from encounters with animals that would have almost certainly been deadly.

18. Inuit Games are played by children built the physical and mental skills needed for hunting and survival in the Arctic. The games required little or no equipment and often stressed physical strength, endurance, agility, and tolerance of pain. Some games included the: Ear Pull, High Kick, Knuckle Hop, and Blanket Toss (which looks super fun if you don't mind heights).

In the Knuckle Hop game, the player takes a push-up position with his hands in fists so that all upper body weight is placed on the knuckles. The player then lifts up his legs and bounces forward on his fists and toes. The player who goes the furthest distance wins. View the following website to see examples of these games from the Arctic Winter Games:

<https://beyondpenguins.ehe.osu.edu/issue/peoples-of-the-arctic/arctic-survival-skills-traditional-inuit-games>

19. Why do some First Nations wear long braids? First, let's remember that teachings and beliefs are different for different First Nations tribes across Turtle Island. Not all First Nations people grew long braids. For example, the Mohawks had a Mohawk haircut, not the Indigenous inspired multicolored spikey hair cut made famous by punk rockers, but a Mohawk haircut specific to Mohawk men. Ok back to long braids. Men and women of many Plains tribes grew their hair long. For some, braids are a symbol of strength, wisdom, identity, carries memory, and connection to ancestors. Hair was often braided in prayer, similar to the 3 strands of the sweetgrass braid, when braiding your hair, prayers to the Creator that your mind, body and spirit work together for the day could be said.

Cultural teachings for hair are especially important to learn if you are planning to go into careers like cosmetology. As a general culturally safe practice for all people, do not touch another person's hair without asking.

20. Who can wear a head dress? The Plains (or Dakota) headdress is the style that is most commonly seen in pop culture, but there are many styles, depending on what First Nation you come from. Chief Isadore Day from Serpent River in Ontario talks about the responsibility that comes with having a headdress. "When you're given a headdress, there's a responsibility that comes with that, and often those responsibilities are a direct tie and connection to who you are, your identity, your place within the context of nationhood." Headdresses are given to leaders as gifts and recipients go through ceremonies and protocols when receiving one. Headdresses have a sacred, cultural meaning to First Nations people therefore mainstream society is asked to respect and honour that by not using them as a fashion accessory or costume.

21. Is it okay to call an Indigenous person "Chief?" If that a person is a Chief, which is a leader of a tribe or clan, and its their title than Yes. If they aren't, then the answer is a hard "No". Sometimes words have more than one meaning. A word itself, out of the context in which it is used, may or may not be offensive. For example, the word 'boy', by itself, is a harmless word. But in the context of racial bigotry toward black men, the word 'boy' takes on a whole new meaning and becomes a racial slur. So words like 'chief', 'brave', and 'savage' are not, in and of themselves, offensive; but their use in the context of racially stereotypical labels of Indigenous people is. A cultural safe practice to learn is to inform yourselves about title and protocol before approaching individuals of different cultures for conversation.
22. What does Two-Spirit Mean? It's an umbrella term that bridges Indigenous and Western understandings of gender and sexuality. You may recognize it as the two that sometimes appears at the end of LGBTQ2. There are many definitions and understandings of Two-Spirit, and each is nation specific. The term was intentionally introduced by Native people with the goal of finding common ground and helping educate about traditional teachings in a contemporary context. View this video to learn more: (Runs 6:16)
<https://www.them.us/video/watch/geo-neptune-explains-two-spirit>
23. Most Indigenous people like to be called by the title of their nation. As you know we have 3 distinct Indigenous groups in Canada called the Metis, Inuit and First Nations. In Alberta we have Metis settlements and First Nations that call Treaty 6, 7 & 8 their traditional territory. The First Nations people in Alberta are Dene tha (Slavey), Dunne 'za (Beaver), Dene Soultine, Chipewyan), Cree (Woodland & Plains), Mohawk (Iroquois/Haudenosaunee), Stoney (Nakoda Sioux), Saulteaux (Plains Ojibwa), Tsuu T'ina and the Blackfoot Confederacy — Siksika, Kainai and Piikani. So just as a person may identify themselves as Ukrainian, Italian, Filipino, a First Nations person may identify themselves as Cree, Stoney or by whatever nation they identify with. Did you know that the Edmonton region continues to have Canada's second largest Indigenous population, second to Winnipeg? Like all other cultures now represented here, there are also other First Nations people from other areas of Canada that choose to live in Edmonton.
24. The City of Edmonton has recently adopted an Indigenous Framework for its staff. The City of Edmonton recognizes that, "as settlers to this land, we must do better". Reconciliation begins with acknowledging historical traumas and current disparities. The City recognizes it needs to honour and respect its foundational relationship with the First Peoples of Canada. This will be accomplished through living the values of mutual respect, responsibility, and renewal to build and maintain strong relationships between all City employees and Indigenous Peoples. The City of Edmonton's Indigenous Framework is intended to answer the question: "How can the City of Edmonton best support and build strong relationships with Indigenous Peoples in Edmonton?".

It is important for students to understand as they enter the workforce that many companies and even levels of government as presented here, are now discussing how developing a culturally competent workforce has been a critical first step in their reconciliation actions.

25. One of the most sacred relationships humans carry is with the Earth, often called “Mother Earth.” Considering her a caregiver and parent, Mother Earth facilitates everything humans need to live, including water (the most essential part of life), plants (for foods and medicines), animals (for shelter, food and clothing) and territories to live. Indigenous communities therefore cared for, looked after and protected Mother Earth as she looked after them, with love, honour, care and respect. This a central reason why Indigenous communities feel so dedicated to protecting and honouring the land. Source: Indspire: Climbing the Mountain Resource, 2021.
26. Did you know that Bannock is not a traditional food of First Nations people? Bannock was a bread recipe that came from Scotland and was adapted by Indigenous people all across North America. So why did bannock become so popular? First, many Metis people have Scottish ancestors and therefore Metis recipes were created. First Nations also adopted Bannock recipes as it became about survival in lean times. The food rations given by the federal Indian Agents to First Nations who were forced to live on reserve, included flour and sugar, which were not a part of an Indigenous diet prior to contact. Bannock became a staple as it lasted a long time, required very few ingredients, and could be easily combined with other ingredients like raisins or molasses. It could also be baked, made on an open fire or fried. If you do a search you will find there is no single recipe for bannock, and there will be many regional differences, but when is perfected it is so very tasty.
27. Indigenous people have their own food related knowledge, values and wisdom. After contact, Indigenous people were not only introduced to flour and sugar, but dairy milk was also introduced. Fast forward a couple centuries later, Indigenous people often still have difficulty digesting these foods and are often lactose intolerant, have high incidence of Type 2 diabetes and are at high risk of heart disease and stroke. A higher than average number of Indigenous people are also often diagnosed with low iron as a majority of Indigenous people lack access to wild meat or fresh fish, which would have been a significant portion of a traditional diet. Traditional teachings often include that food is seen as a gift from the Creator; and we must uphold our sacred responsibility to nurture healthy, interdependent relationships with the land, plants and animals that provide us with our food. First Nations Elders state that the healthiest diet is eating foods that grow and live within a 100 km radius of your ancestral territory therefore it is imperative Indigenous people maintain the ability to make decisions over the amount and quality of food they hunt, fish, gather, grow and eat. Indigenous food sovereignty supports cultural harvesting practices and maintains the ability for Indigenous people to respond to their own needs for healthy, Indigenous foods.

Taking the lead on modern takes on Indigenous foods are some of Canada’s Top Indigenous Chefs. Local Indigenous chef Shane Chartrand – who has competed on TV shows like Chopped Canada and Iron Chef Canada, currently works at the River Cree Resort and Casino. Chartrand's new recipe book, is called, “Tawâw: Progressive Indigenous Cuisine”. To learn more about Canada’s Top Indigenous Chefs visit: <https://www.westjetmagazine.com/story/article/canadas-top-indigenous-chefs>

28. Watch this little jingle dress dancer share healing and joy for those suffering with Co-Vid

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q8A_fhx085s

29. The fiddle is the main instrument used in Métis Music. In the early days, fiddles were hard to obtain and expensive. The Métis simply made their own from maple wood and birch bark. While most music is contained in a bar structure, traditional Métis fiddle music is not. The Métis style of fiddling is unique in North America and can be heard across Northern Western Canada and the United States. The fiddle plays the melody, tells the story, and many Métis legends are recorded in fiddle tunes.

