

Talking Stick is an anonymous chat platform that connects First Nations individuals to culture-based peer support and confidential conversations.

Highlights from this edition

- Unstoppable media buzz: Talking Stick shines spotlight on First Nations success
- New Faces at Talking Stick
- Meet FSIN Youth Chief Hailey Rose

Talking Stick in the News

If media attention is one of the measures of success for the Talking Stick team’s campaign to spread the word about the app and its benefits to First Nations across Saskatchewan, then the past month has been a gold medal performance! Over the past six weeks, Talking Stick has been featured in no less than a half dozen prominent news spots, featuring our team members and their perspectives on the real change that the app is bringing to communities across the province.

- Southwest Regional Manager Robert Gladue was the guest of [Saskatoon’s Global News Morning](#). He was also featured in articles in [Windspeaker](#) and in the [Penticton \(BC\) Herald](#), showing that the word is spreading beyond Saskatchewan.
- Leigh Coté, Regional Manager for Central Region was the subject of an article published in the [Prince Albert Daily Herald](#), about her presentation to members of Saskatchewan’s Métis Nation.
- One of our newest Regional Managers, Nathan Chamakese was featured in a [CBC Radio](#) interview, where he stressed the importance of Talking Stick as a mental health support. He also touched on the importance of the talking stick in First Nations culture.
- Provincial Director, Cecile McKay was invited to speak about Talking Stick on [CTV News Saskatoon](#), where she emphasized the app’s journey and importance of the anonymous Indigenous peer-to-peer connections.



This media recognition is reshaping the narrative surrounding First Nations, highlighting their empowerment and the transformative impact of the Talking Stick program in the region.

Talking Stick Welcomes Three New Regional Managers

With the remarkable growth and widespread reach of Talking Stick, the program’s Regional Managers have become central to its success. The Talking Stick team is thrilled to welcome three new Regional Managers, who in their short time with the program have already made an impact!



From left to right: Shauna, Nathan and Tiffany.

Shauna Keepness-Bourgon (Southeast Region) is Saulteaux and is from Pasqua First Nation, in Southern SK. She brings over 12 years of experience as a nurse with the Saskatchewan Health Authority. She is excited to reach an even larger audience with Talking Stick, ensuring that more people can benefit from this resource.

Nathan Chamakese (Northwest Region) is from Pelican Lake First Nation and brings a wealth of experience working in mental health and substance use. He is a strong advocate for the role of technologies, such as Talking Stick to empower First Nations people to connect with healthy resources.

Tiffany Carrier (Southeast Region) is Plains Cree from Treaty 4 Territory. She is passionate about preserving Indigenous languages and culture and sees Talking Stick as a way to promote health, wellness, and inclusion for First Nations people.

The wealth of experience brought by these new team members will ensure the word of Talking Stick will continue to be spread in a good way!

Hailey Rose: Bringing the Voice of Youth to FSIN

Hailey Rose will be a person to watch. At 20 years old she is already finding her voice and making a difference for First Nations youth in Saskatchewan and across Canada.

While her home community is Mosquito Grizzly Bear's Head First Nation, Hailey is now located a couple of hours down the road as she attends the University of Saskatchewan. She is pursuing a degree in Indigenous Studies and has recently completed her second year in the program.

Most young people would consider the workload of a full-time university program as a full plate but in Hailey's case, it is only half of her story. About a year ago, she was elected to the role of Youth Chief for FSIN, a position that she describes as a full-time job that consumes her time and fuels her passion.

Last April, FSIN hosted a Youth Legislative Assembly and invited four youth leaders from each of the 74 Nations across Saskatchewan to come together for discussions about leadership and matters facing First Nations youth. Hailey was a delegate on a mission: to be elected as one of FSIN's two Youth Chiefs, an influential "by First Nations Youth for First Nations Youth" advocacy position.

The process of being elected involved campaigning throughout the conference and culminated in an opportunity for each candidate to address the delegates to "pitch" them and ask for their support. This was followed by the election, which saw Hailey installed in the post for a 2-year term. Satisfied but not finished, she went on to secure a seat at the AFN Youth Council, a committee with a national scope that she now co-chairs.

Hailey's focus for her term is to advocate for the rights of both First Nations women and First Nations youth, bringing their concerns to light and seeking solutions. She travels extensively throughout Saskatchewan, visiting communities, meeting with youth, delivering workshops, facilitating discussions, and spearheading projects that promote youth empowerment.

The combination of her education and work with FSIN and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), has given Hailey a unique opportunity to lead change.

At the national level, she is working to influence policy development to address the needs of First Nations youth across Canada. She lobbies to bring awareness and action to reduce injustices, and to secure resources to tackle mental health, substance use, and gang involvement in First Nations youth. The connection to AFN has allowed her to connect with youth councils nationally, amplify the messages, and coordinate the responses.

When asked to identify the top three issues being raised by youth, Hailey was quick to respond, with four. "We have an epidemic of youth suicide," she says. She also talked about the extensive use of drugs by youth, as well as an escalation in sexual violence.

Hailey also shared some of her perspectives on education for First Nations youth. "Most youth want to go to school, but cannot," she shares. Hailey explained that many youth are needed at home to take care of younger siblings; and others are faced with barriers and obstacles that come from living in remote northern communities, where access is an ongoing challenge.

Hailey is also concerned about the fact that First Nations youth are becoming more and more disengaged from their culture. "As First Nations youth, we are losing our identity through the loss of our cultural practices and our languages," she says. She feels that her age is important. As a young person, she can relate to the youth, and they to her, and this sets the stage for meaningful conversations and good work to be done.

Hailey is determined to build a sense of belonging for young people. She envisions a world where they feel valued, safe, and proud. She spoke of youth feeling disenfranchised and turning to gangs to feel included. In this way, they lose their ability to be vulnerable and open.

When we asked her if she felt that she was a role model, we found that Hailey is much more comfortable with words like "advocate," "leader," and "warrior." It is her hope that through her platforms with FSIN and AFN that she can help the youth she represents revitalize their culture and languages.

"The best part of the job is spreading love and giving the youth their identity back," says Hailey. "I want to build connections and a sense of community."

Oh, and on Talking Stick: "I love Talking Stick, especially the fact that it is anonymous!"



Youth Chief Hailey Rose

Need to chat? You Talk. We Listen.

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- Confidential. Safe. Secure.
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Thank you to our partners

Talking Stick was created in partnership with Saskatchewan's Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN), Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), and TryCycle Data Systems.

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