



# Creating Futures

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## News Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**January 23, 2009**

### ***Edmonton rap artist to mentor Fort Smith youth***

***Ex-gang member brings message of positive choices and achieving dreams***

Fort Smith, NT – Strategies to make your dreams come true will be on the agenda when Aboriginal rap artist Feenix (aka Shawn Bernard) comes to Fort Smith on Saturday, January 31.

A former gang member turned successful musician and motivational speaker, Feenix will share his journey and experiences – in front of the microphone to behind the scenes. His upbeat, positive and profanity-free songs are a sharp contrast to much of the current popular rap and to his own troubled past. His message is one of empowerment, that despite circumstances, every one of us has the ability to seize control of our lives and achieve our dreams.

Feenix will be appearing at Aurora College (room 148) from 2 to 5 pm. The public is invited to attend, but seating is limited. After his performance, he will host a workshop and meet one-on-one with youth who have a serious interest in pursuing a career in hip hop music. Aspiring musicians will have the opportunity to discuss lyrics, beats and strategies to break into the business.

The message of overcoming adversity is firmly rooted in his own past. Growing up in the worst area of Edmonton, Feenix became immersed in a life of drugs, gangs, crime and run-ins with the law. He lost both his parents and his sister to drugs and his children were taken from him. Putting that behind him was not easy, but he has, and strives to move forward every day, rather than looking behind. His stage name draws upon the mythological bird, the Phoenix, which at the end of its life cycle sets itself ablaze, then is reborn out of the ashes to begin life anew.

Feenix's new life includes nominations for Canadian Aboriginal Music Awards in both 2007 and 2008, nation-wide radio airplay for several of his songs and awards for performances. He has starred in a National Film Board film about his life, *Walking Alone*, which tells the story of his recovery, music and family. Having recently completed an Aboriginal Family Support Worker program, he now works with youth in care. He also visits schools and communities spreading the message that high risk lifestyles, drugs, alcohol and gangs are a literal "dead end".

Feenix is also visiting schools in Hay River, Lutsel K'e and Yellowknife on this tour.

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