

Voices of the Urban Indigenous Peoples



Presents

**The 2nd Edition of Aboriginal Voices of Survival,
Resiliency and Community Wellness**

Acknowledgements

The power of story telling was evident on June 11, 2008, when the Prime Minister of Canada delivered a speech apologizing to Aboriginal peoples for their role in the Indian residential school. This speech echoed many of the hardships many Aboriginal peoples lived through in this country. As a pro-active community development group the Voices of the Urban Indigenous Peoples have worked tireless hours to create an online document resource that demonstrates the strength of Aboriginal peoples as a whole.

This online book was put together *to highlighting mentors, role models* through the written medium to create a community esteem building project. that will be shared via internet and also through a printed document

Taking pride in our people is key to continued community wellness and demonstrating that we have so much to share with mainstream society.

Our dedicated team writers, editors are local individuals take much pride in this project for together as a community we stand in solidarity to making a difference for the next generations.

We would like to acknowledge people who firstly shared their stories. Rory Mallett for his computer skills is the creation of this document; Susan McKenzie and Lise Robinson for their tireless hours of interviewing and editing stories. To Bobbi-Jo Tiedemann for typing up many of the stories. To the Voices of the Urban Indigenous Peoples who have worked in the community for the past five years working on many projects from Smudging of the Streets to creating documents such as this to help enhance our community.

Sincerely in wellness,

The Authors, Aboriginal Voices
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Bernadette Iahtail

I am Swampi Cree and was in Attawpiskat, Ontario. I am presently married and have three stepchildren, one son and a grandchild.

Earliest/Fondest Memories

Due to my upbringing in the foster care system, I cannot recall any happy memories. I constantly moved in and out of foster homes and was abused in care. I am not saying that I never laughed as child but nothing fond stands out. My happiest or fondest moments are when my first child was born and then becoming a grandmother.

Do you currently or did your family of origin actively practice tradition?

I attend sweats, round dances, and smudge on a regular basis. An Elder once informed me the significance of knowing who you are and never forgetting who you are. When my granddaughter was born, we used to whisper her name in her ear as the Elder stated by doing this; she will always know who she is. I will always remember what the Elder had said. I am very grateful for teachings from the Elders.

What teaching of resiliency that has evolved from your journey would you like to impart for this project?

People I met in life, whether it was a positive or negative experience. For me practicing spirituality has enabled me to forgive and move on from past hurts. You can never forget where you come from or where you've been or change the past but you can teach and share with others that here is life after child welfare, sexual abuse, addiction and other hurts. In other words, Creating Hope is essential. I was once told that you are born alone and die alone, it is what you do in between that counts and the choices that you make. It is like planting seeds.

Educational/training & professional background & volunteering

I am a registered social worker and have a Diploma in Social Work and Addictions. I am continuously educating myself by taking workshops and training. I also facilitate workshops at various institutes such as universities, colleges and other agencies on the cycle of child welfare.

I am the Executive Director for the Creating Hope Society which focuses on ending the cycle of Aboriginal children being separated from their families and communities through the child welfare system and creating a healing process for those affected. I also do volunteer work for the Aboriginal Human Rights Commission, the Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations and the Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research as an advisory member. I try to help out wherever I can.

Were there role model's or agencies that impacted your life?

My role models are Maggie Hodgson, Buffy Saint Marie, Muriel Stanley Venne, Ovide Mercredi, Elijah Harper, Phil Fontaine and Lewis Cardinal. The main agency that impacted me was the Nechi Institute. The agency really helped me put a face on the Aboriginal culture. It dealt with issues such as residential schools, family dynamics, addictions and personal growth.



If you have any words of advice for the younger generation what would that be?

Number one – Trust your intuition. Second – Learn to be safe. Third – Trust in someone that is there for you. There is always at least one person out there that cares for you!

What are your wishes for you family and community?

For the community, it would be to have a healthy wholesome community. For my family, it would be to maintain our unconditional love. The way I see it, if I am not healthy, then that affects my family, if my family is not healthy then that affects the community. It is important to look after oneself.

Additional Information

Society is based on telling your story which includes; who you are, where you come from and where you are going. “Knowing thy self, healing thy self can help others”.

Channing Crowshoe

Place of Birth: Channing was born in Calgary.

Ethnic origin: / Ancestral history: Blackfoot and Métis

Current family: Single

Earliest/fondest childhood memories:

Channing's family used to go to ceremonies in Montana. Being together and all the people were so kind at these ceremonies.

Do you currently or did your family of origin actively practice tradition? How?

Yes, this weekend there is a ceremony and that that is on the Siksika Reserve.

What teaching of resiliency that has evolved from your journey would you like to share for this project?

The previous generations had to blaze trails for this generation and future generations. When hearing his parents talking about the 60's and 70's and what they had to endure really motivates Channing in reaching his own goals for that will impact the future generations to come.

Educational/training & professional background: & volunteering (helping out) Education at the University of Alberta in the Native Studies and Education combined degree program.
Volunteering - United Way of Calgary – Aboriginal inclusiveness task group.
Samaritans of Southern Alberta- Suicide hotline for southern Alberta

What were some of the greatest lessons of your life?

Channing grandmother took him to the Old Man River and to get to the other side of the river he would have to take small steps. As he got older this means more and more. Channing views this now as an analogy to life.

Were there role model's or agencies that impacted your life? If yes how?

Role model's have been his parents and they showed him how to walk in two worlds at one time, mainstream society and the traditional Aboriginal way of life.

If you have any words of advice for the younger generation what would that be? Find out who you are and to pursue and education meaning in both worlds you cannot have one or the other you need both.

What are you wishes for your family and community?

Balance and Health

When the Elders tell us to be balanced they mean something spiritual, emotional, mental and physical on a daily basis.



Damian Abrahams

Damian was born in Vancouver BC

Ethnic origin: / Ancestral history: First Nations/ Haida

Current family(i.e. married, common law, single) Single

Earliest/fondest childhood memories:

Traveling with my late Great Grandmother (my Naani).
We went as far as Ottawa and Hull Quebec

Do you currently or did your family of origin actively practice tradition? How?

Prior to First Contact, the Haida Nation numbered 25'000. Our numbers dwindled to 500 after First Contact. Much of our culture, art, language and ceremonies were lost. I am, however, a Sundancer and I help at pipe ceremonies. My uncle and I also drum and sing Haida songs together.



What teaching of resiliency that has evolved from your journey would you like to share for this project?

No matter how intimidating a problem might be, believe in yourself. Be patient with yourself and understand that you have limits! Problems are temporary and the solutions will come in time. My people didn't give up, they adapted. Our numbers now are 10'000+ and our art has gained worldwide recognition.

Educational/training & professional background: & volunteering (helping out)

I'm going into my second year of my Bachelor of Arts degree, I currently volunteer with the Youth Emergency Shelter Society as a youth support worker once a week.

What were some of the greatest lessons of your life?

My Late Naani taught me to express my emotions, if I need to cry, cry. And if I'm happy then laugh!

My uncle taught me to never give on life no matter what. He was there for me when I was at my worst and he is there now that I'm at my best.

My nephew taught me about Unconditional love when he was a new born baby

Were there role model's or agencies that impacted your life? If yes how?

My uncle has been there for me throughout my life. I've had someone that supported my positive and negative choices. His love introduced me to Native Spirituality and a good life.

If you have any words of advice for the younger generation what would that be?

Strive to be the best that you are in whatever you do! We, as youth, have to take over when the Elders go home and by being our best our community benefits.

What are your wishes for your family and community?

My wish for both my family and community is co-operation. It was through co-operation that we lived off the land. It wasn't just families that co-operated, it was the whole community that worked together to ensure longevity. Society is so concerned with individual success that people get left behind. It's hard to see people not getting along and get caught up in addiction and alcoholism. I believe that each life and each experience overlaps one another and by that alone we are connected to one another.

Additional Information:

My life story will be sent in the near future...

Daniel McKennitt

I was born in St. Albert, Alberta and I am Ojibway. I have never been married and I am currently single.

Earliest/fondest childhood memories:

My fondest memory was participating in my first sharing circle with Elders and youth.

Do you currently or did your family of origin actively practice tradition? How?

I currently practice tradition by participating in pipe ceremonies and sweats. I also have a keen interest in traditional healing medicine.

What teaching of resiliency that has evolved from your journey would you like to impart for this project?

My resiliency comes from the teachings of our Elders about traditional healing.



Educational/training & professional background: & volunteering (helping out)

I am currently enrolled in the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry at the University of Alberta (U of A). I have a Bachelor of Science, Mathematics and Physical Science from the U of A. I have received numerous honors and awards in writing contests, bursaries and scholarships. These awards have assisted me in my career path in medicine.

My past work experience has been as a research assistant with U of A, the Alberta Cancer Board and various Government departments. Many of these positions entailed participatory research projects with Aboriginal communities and health related matters. This included researching culturally competency of health providers with Aboriginal clients and health interventions within Aboriginal communities. One of my roles with the Department of Advanced Education was facilitating a program to stimulate interest in post secondary education within high schools with high Aboriginal involvement.

I am a professional member of the Alberta Medical Association, Canadian Medical Association, Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada and the Community-Campus Partnerships for Health.

What were some of the greatest lessons of your life?

My greatest lesson has been learning to be humble and to also share your successes.

Were there role model's or agencies that impacted your life? If yes how?

My grandfather, Noah Beaulieu was my main role model in life. He lived until 1999 and he taught me all I know about Native culture.

If you have any words of advice for the younger generation what would that be?

It is important to stay in school as education is the great equalizer.

What are you wishes for your family and community?

I would like to see everyone become healthy by healing together.

Darlene Reid (nee Anikina)

Place of birth: Inuvik, N.W.T. Inuvik means “living place” and the town will host its 50th anniversary this year on July 18, 2008.

Ethnic Origin: I am Inuvialuit, which translates into “the real people”. The language we speak is Inuvialukton. It is one of four dialects of the Inuit language.

Current family:

I am married and we have three children at home. Our other four children are adults living on their own.

Earliest/fondest memory:

My fondest memories were being close to some of my teachers in school. They encouraged me to express my talent in art. I remember winning awards for my art at a young age in school. One other very fond memory would be meeting my father for the first time when I was eighteen years old. This was after spending my childhood in foster care.



Do you currently of did your family of origin actively practice tradition? How?

I did not practice tradition growing up, as I was not raised in my own community. I was raised in the foster care system and lived primarily with Caucasian families in NWT and Alberta. It was not until that I was sixteen years old that I returned to my home community of Inuvik. There I was introduced to caribou, fish, mukluk, and the Inuit clothing. This was all new to me and it was quite a challenge to learn my about identity, culture, language and meet my relatives. I enjoy learning about Indigenous traditions and I am currently learning Cree and Gwitchen. I am also learning Cree ceremonies and spirituality.

What teaching of resiliency that has evolved from your journey would you like to impart of this project?

My resiliency comes from the people who believed in me and encouraged me to live a healthy and positive lifestyle. It is important to surround yourself with people who supportive and lead healthy lifestyles. This has helped me both with my family and art. I believe it is also important to be open about oneself when it comes to healing but it has to be done in the right way as well so it does not harm anyone else. There are many ways that one can heal themselves. This includes through a creative means such as art or writing about it. It is significant to mention that my father quit drinking for twenty-nine years and I have quit for twenty fours years.

Educational/training & professional background: volunteering

I am a “snack lady” at Prince Charles School and after I finish my shift, I volunteer my time at the school. I help out in anyway possible sometimes doing art projects. I encourage the children to express themselves through art. I am also the president for the parent advisory committee at Prince Charles School.

I am an artist and I do oils, acrylics, chalks, pastels, pen and inks, pencil drawings and some tapestry. I have won awards for my artwork starting from elementary school to present. In grade three in Hay River, NWT, I won first prize for a firefighter art contest. I have illustrated three children’s books called The Way of the North, When Bad Things Happen and Where in the House is Carmen’s Cleopatra by Rosalie Rasmussen. I created a poster for the grand opening of the Inuvialuit communications society. I am planning on doing the logo for the Inuit Society letterhead and entering a poster calendar for Peace Hill’s Trust. I have also taught Inuit art at the University of Alberta.

Right now I am assisting with coordination of a ten-day art gallery for Inuit artists during Capital Ex. This is in recognition of Indigenous artists and includes their biographies and artwork. At Capital Ex, there is a plan to construct a 20x20 igloo to put on display. I participated last year displaying my art at Capital Ex and sold many pieces to tourists. I thrive in art whether I am creating it or organizing an event. It is my passion.

What were some of the greatest lessons of your life?

My greatest lessons include “letting go of the past and not allowing it to hold me back”. “Believe that you can do things in a positive way daily”. Other lessons include knowing your identity. “Hold on to the land that was given to you and no matter where you live, your culture is always with you”.

Were there role model’s or agencies that impacted your life? How

My grade three teacher inspired me by recognizing my talent in art. There have been many people from NWT, Alberta and throughout Canada who helped me express my art. I have been recognized in magazines and will have exposure for the second time at Capital Ex. When it comes to role models, I believe that one could speak to hundreds of people and it just takes one person that you might touch but that one person is worth it.

If you have any words of advice for the younger generation what would that be?

It is important to stick with positive people and people who are helpful. It is too easy to lose a job or be someone your not. Believe in what you can do and not what you cannot do. It is important to voice your self and utilize your rights. We have rights to vote!

What are your wishes for your family and community?

For my family, I would like them to recognize their Inuit identity so they have something to lean on. For my community, I dream that the Inuit could have their own “Inuit village” just like Fort Edmonton. It would be administered by the government and open to everyone to visit. I would also like to see an Aboriginal art studio/gallery that would be open to all Aboriginal people where we could leave our artwork. It would be a supportive place to share ideas and not to be misused.

Additional Comments

I lean toward a spiritual life and how we conduct ourselves will depend on whether we end up in that spiritual place in life. Spirituality is a life long process and gives us something to focus on.

Debbie Coulter

Date & place of birth: Calgary, Second generation Urban Aboriginal, grandfather born in northern Alberta and taken at age 11 by Father Lacombe to live in Calgary.

Ethnic origin: / Ancestral history: Many relatives around Alberta – Métis- Second generation urban Aboriginal. Both parents are of Métis ancestry.

Current family: (i.e. married, common law, single)

Single mom of 5, four boys and one girl. First son, Jason, died of crib death at age 4 months. Second son Jarod and wife Joanne and their 3 children, Jamie, Jordan, Jenna, Daughter Rheanna , PhD caudate (molecular biologist) son Blaze (Developmentally delayed, was featured in a book on successful stories of people living with Developmental Delay, book titled “Big Enough Dreams”). Blaze has worked at the same company for six years and was also awarded a special certificate and cash award from Chrysalis recognizing his good work. Youngest son Reese is completing his 3rd year at the University of Alberta for a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology



Earliest/fondest childhood memories: Grandfather (mother’s dad), Mr. Paul Villeneuve, and his teachings - “spoiled” her rotten - first granddaughter. Fond memories of going to the Calgary stampede and visiting the Indian Village with her granddad and listening to stories from the Elders. Explanations of life creation, spirit, grass, trees, made so much sense. Native teachings.

Do you currently or did your family of origin actively practice tradition? How?

Yes, Métis tradition just a part of everyday life. It’s a day to day practice. Strong influence from mother, Senator Thelma Chalifoux (Ret.) who inherited her organizing skills from her father Mr. Paul Villeneuve.

What teaching of resiliency that has evolved from your journey would you like to impart for this project?

Despite the challenges of being a single mom and poor financially it did not deter this family from success. Debbie told her children that if they wanted to go to University they would have to work hard to do it on their own. Very little money meant that her children have taken personal “responsibility” for their own education and their own life choices.

Desmond Wells

Date & place of birth: Edmonton 1989 – Royal Alex
5 – 8 years of age Onion Lake
Currently 19 years old

Ethnic origin: / Ancestral history: Cree

Current family (i.e. married, common law, single)
Single, older sister and younger brother

Earliest/fondest childhood memories: Moving out of Onion Lake was great time to get away from the negativity in community. Edmonton became my home at the age of nine years old. Edmonton schooling was better as he could talk to the teachers.

Do you currently or did your family of origin actively practice tradition? How?

No. Move traditional? After mom got sick. She is now doing better.

What teaching of resiliency that has evolved from your journey would you like to impart for this project?

At the beginning of last year he was fighting alcoholism. Where he went to Partners for Kids and Youth Outreach the teachers were very supportive in helping to work towards accomplishing his education. That is the only support he was able to get. His mom was sick with cancer and Desmond tries to be strong for her as she is getting chemotherapy. Desmond is the only support to her.

Educational/training & professional background:

Currently grade 12

What were some of the greatest lessons of your life?

Being able to stand up and being strong for his mom was really important to see that she got well. Desmond did not expect anything back. Out of fear of losing his mom he started drinking. The teacher's supports really helped him by allowing sharing his feelings of fear and anxiety regarding his mom's health issues.

Were there role model's or agencies that impacted your life? If yes how?

Kevin McKinnon is my greatest role model because I can talk to him. I don't need a reason to talk to him. I feel very comfortable with him.

If you have any words of advise for the younger generation what would that be?

His advice is to never turn someone away when someone wants to talk to you. This happens far too much these days. Be a good listener.

What are you wishes for your family and community?

He wishes everybody would open up more and share their feelings.



Educational/training & professional background:

Grade 10 - had to quit school temporarily due to her moms' poor health. Helped to take care of her siblings then left home at the age of 15. After a few years of wandering, Debbie upgraded her education and participated in one of the first Aboriginal specific training programs in Alberta with the Alberta Native Communication Society. She graduated with a certificate in journalism, photography, Television arts and cultural teachings. She also met Elder Peter O'Chiese at that time which helped her to reconnect with her roots and follow a more traditional path. She worked at Nechi Institute as a Trainer and eventually, a Trainer of Trainers. Her younger sister than got cancer and Debbie quit her job to spend the last few months of her sister's life with her. Very difficult time - very painful. Debbie has since gone on to work as a contracted consultant for Aboriginal Awareness Training and as a contracted facilitator and Aboriginal Relations Consultant. Currently, Debbie works as a Community Development Coordinator with a provincial Aboriginal organization.

What were some of the greatest lessons of your life?

Loss of sister and infant son taught the valuable lesson that a person should not procrastinate. Her sister taught her to not overlook any opportunity that came along. Losing her first son taught her to always say you love your loved ones. Teachings of Elders are what kept her strong; if it was not for them she would not know where she would be today. Debbie also learned the valuable lesson that you are responsible for your own learning's, actions and behaviours.

Were there role model's or agencies that impacted your life? If yes how?

Grandfather was her first role model; mother was another and is now one of her best friends. Both her grandfather and her mother were directly involved in the Métis community as organizers and community leaders. Watching them while growing up, Debbie learned at an early age the importance of giving back to the community.

If you have any words of advice for the younger generation what would that be?

Know yourself; be proud of who you are, take responsibility for yourself and the choices you make, say you are sorry when you are wrong. 3 rules for kids when they are going out with friends to socialize: 1. keep your back to the wall, 2. know where the exit is and have a clear path to it. 3. Always watch your drink.

What are you wishes for your family and community?

Family health; safety, happiness, protection from evil. That her children have long happy lives. That her children achieve their true destinies whatever that might be. Community united and strong, a proud Métis Nation. Bringing the teachings home by passing the teachings on to the next generation is the greatest reward. Aboriginal teachings are life teachings. Debbie is also involved in community development.

Additional Information:

Debbie contributes to her community in a variety of capacities including;

President of the Board for the Canadian Native Friendship Centre

Board Member – Métis Child and Family Services

Past Board Member – Aboriginal Women's Professional Association

Past Co-Chair – Aboriginal Coalition for Services to Children and Families

Past Committee Member – Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Affairs Committee

Hobbies: music, reading, word games, puzzles and writing

Francis Whiskeyjack

Born: Saddle Lake, Alberta

Ethnic Origin: Cree

Current Family Status: Married with children.

My fondest memory was the “freedom of spirit” that I experienced growing up in a large family. There were twelve children in my family and we lived in a one room log cabin in Saddle Lake, Alberta. I felt very grounded during this time of my life. My dad did mixed farming and worked at a chemical plant at a nearby town. I remember him having to commute back and forth to work. This was back in the horse and buggy days.

Growing up, I had spent time with my grandparents who instilled teachings before I went to residential school. I speak Cree fluently. My grandparents also were church goers at the Catholic Church. My maternal grandfather held sweat lodge ceremonies. I also recall both grandparents celebrating commemorative feasts. These were memorial feasts and give away ceremonies. The purpose of this ritual was to feed the spirits of the ones who passed on so that nothing would hold their spirit back on the earth. It was to keep the spirits happy and to not have them come back and haunt others. There is a Cree term for this ceremony (niminkiwini). The closest English translation would be “appeasing the spirits” ceremony.

The teaching of resiliency that I would like to impart for this project is always give thanks to the Creator for life and everything life brings. “Acknowledge the life we were given”. This has helped me through residential school and other difficult times although it did not seem that way while I was going through the experience.

I volunteer as much as possible. I support people who are grieving by playing guitar and singing gospel music at the wakes of loved ones. I was involved in the Indigenous Games by supporting young athletes. I have been a board member for Saddle Lake Health Board, the Native Friendship Centre and the Board of Education. I have been an active member of the Urban Aboriginal Initiatives with the City of Edmonton. I also present eagle feathers to Aboriginal students who graduate from the University of Alberta. The Amiskwaciy Academy also has a singing group that I am involved in. My title here at the Amiskwaciy Academy is Cultural Resource/Elder. I teach Aboriginal arts to the students and have a passion for working with youth.

My greatest lessons in life were spending time with my mentor, the late Joe P. Cardinal. Other great lessons have been walking the path of wellness and learning self discipline.

The role models who influenced me were the late J.P. Cardinal, George Brertton, Jerry Saddleback, and Leo McGilvery. There are also traditional counterparts who I learned from and have been given adopted brothers and sisters through sweat lodge ceremonies, healing circles, fasting, and pipe rituals.

My advice to the younger generation would be to embrace lessons of self discipline and lead a healthy lifestyle.



Other imparting words are:

“View mistakes as learning opportunities and try not to repeat them”.

“The way of the sweetgrass is to be kind to others”.

“Love your fellow man”.

“Start everyday with good intent”.

“Try to learn the old ways by approaching Elders. This includes knowing your language and being proud of who you are”.

“Making the most of your time as life is short. Time wasted is time gone forever and one should use it in the best possible way”.

My wishes for my family are to reestablish our family unity. This also includes my extended siblings. It is important to be respectful of the various belief systems that others have and to be nonjudgmental of each other.

Freida Gladue

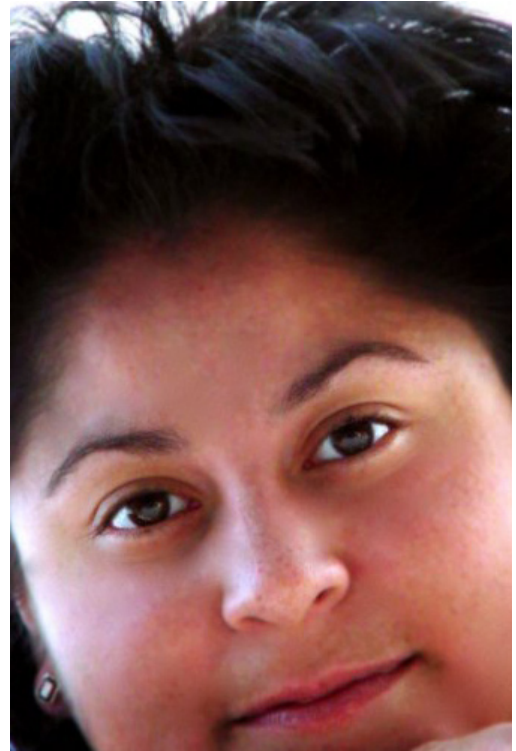
Born in Dawson Creek, BC 1970

Ethnic origin: / Ancestral history: Cree, Salteaux and French

Current family (i.e. married, common law, single):

Common law 10 years

Earliest/fondest childhood memories: Freida always felt she had a significant role in her community based on her parents' involvement. Was in a documentary called "Moccasin flats" at 3 years of age. Film was about the first Métis housing project in Canada. Freida remembers her white wagon with big red wheels and her grandfather Gladue singing in Cree. Another fond childhood memory was being allowed to wear my figure skates in the truck while her father drove her to the arena for her 5am figure skating lessons. Activities that occupied in my time while I was a kid was figure skating, baton twirling, hockey, karate, ballet, jazz, tap and anything my little community offered. I knew at an early age that we were role models for other children in our community since we had been successful in all the sports we were in.



Do you currently or did your family of origin actively practice tradition? How?

Absolutely! I first experienced my Métis/First Nations culture from a very early age. Family participated in annual activities like hunting and gathering for the winter. My first spiritual experience started from the age of 7 while attending and supporting friends and family in fasts, ceremonies and sweats. Parents also assisted in creating the Friendship Centre in Chetwynd, BC and her mother my mother also helped to develop a women's centre in our community.

What teaching of resiliency that has evolved from your journey would you like to impart for this project?

Having a great sense of humor always makes tough things easier to swallow. Grassroots and community development started when I was part of the documentary "Moccasin Flats" the 1st Métis Housing Project in Canada.

Educational/training & professional background:

Grade 12, Marketing Communications Diploma, Design and Motion Graphics Diploma. Freida would also like to explore a Fine Arts degree.

What were some of the greatest lessons of your life?

Life is not fair, live in the moment and maintain a positive outlook no matter how bad the situation is, something good comes out of everything.

Were there role model's or agencies that impacted your life? If yes how?

Biggest role models are her family. Parents taught Freida that life is never fair and most importantly that if you want to achieve your goals then persevere...if you fail keep going eventually you'll succeed

If you have any words of advise for the younger generation what would that be?

Persevere and dream big. Stay positive.

What are your wishes for your family and community?

Miracle for my sister Sandra so she can see her children, have children. My wish for the community is that we all work together successfully. Unity builds strength.

Glinis Buffalo

Place of birth and ethnic origin

I was born in Ponoka, Alberta and I am from Samson Cree First Nation. Full Status Indian.

Current family (i.e. married, common law, single).

I currently have a boyfriend.

Earliest/fondest childhood memories:

My Mom raised my six sisters, two brothers and me on Samson Cree First Nation. We were all very close to each other growing up. One memory in particular was playing in the sand pits with my sisters near my dad's house. It was pouring rain that day and we had made a mud slide in the pit and we were having lots of fun sliding down just like a water slide. My sister Claudine, who is three years older, had brought our puppies with us to join the fun. She decided to give them a bath in our swimming pool that the rain created. Unfortunately, the puppies drowned because we didn't realize that they could not swim. That part of the story was really sad but we were having so much fun. And what made it even funnier is when we went home, we were all freaking out because my dad was going to be so angry, angry because we were all covered in mud. We thought we were pretty sneaky as we crawled by my mom and dad to the bathtub. We didn't know we left a trail of mud for them.



My fondest memory was the story telling by my late Mosum. Every year at Christmas, he would reminisce about how I was trying to teach my younger sisters and cousins to sing Christmas songs. He said I told them “follow after me, jingle bells; jingle bells..... old Macdonald had a farm”. I was probably seven years old when I made that up. As children, my siblings and I use to make up stories to each other. My Mosum playfully referred to me as “big mouth” because I talked too much.

Do you currently or did your family of origin actively practice tradition? How?

My late Mosum held sweats and now my uncles have taken over the tradition. We regularly attend or host feasts and round dances. We will be having our one year memorial feast for my late cousin very soon. I also partake in smudging rituals. Traditionally my family celebrates the “becoming of a woman” when a young girl reaches that stage in life.

What teaching of resiliency that has evolved from your journey would you like to impart for this project?

I use to talk to my late Mom about everything and she would advise me on matters. I treasure the mother and daughter relationship. So I would say it important to build that kind of a relationship with someone whether it is your mother, father, auntie or whoever. Now that my Mom is not here, I remember clearly her teachings about talking and giving things over to the Creator. I seem to be able to understand her words even more now. My resiliency comes from my strong belief in the Creator and the relationship with my Mom.

Another significant part of resilience is Forgiveness. This includes accepting who you are and what happens in life. Things happen for a reason. My Mom passed away as a result of being infected with Hantavirus, a respiratory disease caused by exposure to contaminated rodents. At first the doctors could not determine my mother's illness but when they did discover the cause, it was too late. However, the doctors were then able to treat my sister and my nephew for Hantavirus with the knowledge of my mother's infection. She saved their life. I do not hold any grudges as a result of her death. What is important now is that people understand that the Hantavirus is preventable like many other ailments from the environment such as mould. It is crucial that we are educated about these types of environmental hazards.

Educational/training & professional background: & volunteering (helping out)

I completed my Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Science from the University of Lethbridge when I was twenty two years old. I was good in sciences in high school and originally I was interested in dentistry. I took pre-dentistry but then I discovered that was not for me. I became more interested in environmental sciences. After university, I became an environmental consultant and moved to Calgary.

Now I am working for the City of Edmonton as an Environmental Planner. My position entails reviewing land and development applications for the City. I use a checklist to ensure the applicants are doing their environmental due diligence and depend on my knowledge of environmental legislation and issues. I am also working with other City departments and affiliates on a contaminated sites committee. My role is to make certain the land is protected and comes first.

What were some of the greatest lessons of your life?

Not to take people or life for granted. I truly appreciate the mother/daughter/grandmother relationships. Life is too short. Appreciate who you are now and honor the discussions and friendships that you hold with others.

Were there role model's or agencies that impacted your life? If yes how?

My Mom, she taught me so much. I am a strong woman as a result and I would not be where I am without her. My auntie Grace taught me to be ambitious, dedicated and inspiring. She is a mentor and taught me different skills than my Mom. My Mom provided me with strong values and taught me to ask for strength and guidance from the Creator. My Mom had a way of looking at the bigger picture. For example when I believed that I had not passed a chemistry class in university, it was my Mom who put things back into perspective. She stated that failing one exam does not affect your whole university career. It does not change the fact that you exceeded in your other classes. As it turned out, I did not fail the exam but she was able to look outside and see what is real.

An agency that impacted my life is the Samson Cree Nation Human Resources. Heather Buffalo supported me on my career path. They have been invaluable with their support.

If you have any words of advice for the younger generation what would that be?

My advice would be to finish school. If you finish your grade twelve and are undecided about what to do next, then that is okay. It is also important to gain work skills, travel and life experience. Just don't quit school.

Another piece of advice is to be respectful. When I was young, we could never talk back to our parents like some of the young kids today. Being respectful to others will also help you in the future.

What are your wishes for your family and community?

There have been so many things going on in my family....so many losses. There have been so many things like cancer, diabetes, and suicide. People do not have to go through that. I wish for my family to be happy and have strength to learn from these experiences. Of course, I wish for prosperity and good health.

For my community, it seems like Hobbema (4-Nations) are always portrayed badly in the news. There are lots of good things that happen there. I would like for the community to be healthy and have everyone contribute to make it a better place. We need to move on from that image that is depicted in the news. I would like to see people start their own initiatives such as their own businesses.

Jessica Sanderson

Place of birth: Jessica was born at the Royal Alexander Hospital in Edmonton

Ethnic origin: Ancestral history Jessica is First Nations from James Smith Cree Nation

Current family. Jessica lives with her boyfriend and her wonder three year old daughter Kadence

Earliest/fondest childhood memories: When Jessica was young her papa passed away when she was young she remember her and her first cousin used to get oranges and five bucks he was always playful and very loving. He was funny and had a great sense of humor. He was my father figure and also was the male role model in our family for all the grandchildren.

Do you currently or did your family of origin actively practice tradition? How? Yes every year my papa passed away they had a feast for him and great grandfather. They are constantly going to pow-wows and feasts. Her daughter dances traditional and she really enjoyed it.

What teaching of resiliency that has evolved from your journey would you like to share for this project? AT about 17 years of age Jessica was involved with alcoholism and really battled with that . As a young person she had no self worth and did not care about her future. Things happen for a reason and when spiraling downward and met her partner and getting pregnant really made pivotal change in her life. She gave her something to live for and inspired her to move forward in life in pursuing her education and helping out community as much as she can and being a better person.

Educational/training & professional background: & volunteering (helping out)

Amiskwaciy Academy for high school from there she took two years off and than she went to Norquest College to upgrade and than enrolled in the NAIT –BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM and just completed first year... Her goal is to be an accountant and open her own business. The program at NAIT is 4 years to become an accountant.

What were some of the greatest lessons of your life? Jessica is truly working on breaking the cycles of oppression by actualizing her education as many of her family are not educated. She is the first to be striving for a professional career that will make a difference for her family.

Were there role model's or agencies that impacted your life? If yes how?

Jessica tried so hard to get funding for schooling and there was an agency Swampy East Side Limb they truly helped me to attain the first year of my college diploma and they have committed to fund me until I completed the two years. I am very grateful to them.



If you have any words of advice for the younger generation what would that be? Regardless of what family situation you come from every youth should take advantage of their schooling and get educated. For the youth of today to achieve your goals you have to take risks towards achieving your goals and life purpose.

What are your wishes for your family and community?

Jessica's hope for the future is that where there is alcoholism there should be more people to help youth in overcoming the stressors. When she was young she had no help. That is why she got into the drinking. She did not have a role model and no one told her of the consequences. If parents cannot fulfill that role it would be good to have someone else do it. She wishes everyone to work together and to put an end to violence.

Jo-Ann Daniels

Born in St. Paul des Métis, Alberta, during the Silver Jubilee.

Jo-Ann's background is Cree on her Mother's side from Saddle Lake Cree First Nations and Métis on her father's side from Kikino Métis Settlement.

Currently, Jo-Ann is working as a Policy Analyst/Research Manager with the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women (IAAW).

Some of her earliest memories include:

At the young age of 3 years her family moved to Jasper Place so her Father could secure employment in his trade of carpentry. The home they moved to was brand new, but there was no running water at that time. She remembers that the sidewalks were wooden, boardwalks, and this was the first time she experienced living on a block where neighbors lived so close in proximity. What was really amazing to Jo-Ann was that for the first time her friends lived either next door to her or from just around the block – so close.

As a little girl and the youngest of 4 sisters, Jo-Ann was able to spend a lot of time with her Mom while her sisters went to school. Her Mom worked for affluent Edmontonians as a Housekeeper and many times brought Jo-Ann with her. This was the first time she saw how some non-Native people lived. She was amazed to see cooks, housecleaners and so much food. This was also the first time she was exposed to processed foods such as Tang, Oval tine, and store-bought sliced white bread.

Her parents were both heavily involved in Aboriginal issues and politics, her Father, Stan Daniels revived the Métis Association of Alberta in the 1960s and he was the first leader to get government funding for an Aboriginal organization in Alberta and in Canada; the Stan Daniels Healing Centre is named after him because he also got funding dollars for Native Counseling Services, the Indian Association, and Native Communications Society. This opened the doors for all Aboriginal people in Canada to begin receiving funding. Her mother, Christine, also fought for the Rights of First Nations women who lost their Treaty Rights because of marriage to non-Treaty men. Her parents left her a legacy about the value of community work and to invest in the Aboriginal Community for generations to come. From the Métis she learnt about politics and the Cree about Culture.

Jo-Ann's family lived Culture by picking medicines, participating in ceremonies, making dancing regalia and traveling around the world to share the gift of dance; her Mother founded both the White Braid Society and the White Buffalo Society. Jo-Ann went to the first Canadian Native Friendship Centre when it was located at 108 St and 102 Ave, where she also participated in many cultural activities. Jo-Ann says that the Métis and Cree Cultures in Edmonton are the roots of Urban Aboriginal Culture are emerging simultaneously: Aboriginal people never assimilated.



Something she learned from her Father: “You are never alone because you always have yourself”. Jo-Ann has to come to understand this as meaning – the Self is strong, resilient, reliable and resourceful, so one never has to worry about being alone.

In University, Jo-Ann had a double major in Political Science and Canadian History and a minor in Art History. She has been involved in community development for the past 30 years and has sat on some 60 different boards and committees throughout her career. She also has in film making and TV production; she is also an accomplished designer. She says she refuses to work for government or big business because they do not understand or practice Aboriginal philosophies.

Jo-Ann’s greatest lesson in Life is that CREE & METIS Cultures are Life enhancing, nurturing, healing and proved Health; that Culture is an imperative for action. “I would not want to be anything else than what I am. “

Her role models are her Father and Mother because of what they were able to accomplish for the Community in their lifetimes and keep the Family together in spite of all the obstacles. Ralph and Regina Cardinal, two wondrous Elders and medicine people from Saddle Lake Cree First Nations, were her teachers and had a profound impact on her life. Muriel Stanley Venne is her role model now because Muriel is a proven leader and has a vision that includes all Aboriginal women; Muriel is the only person for whom Jo-Ann would work.

Jo-Ann’s advice for the young Aboriginal people: “Do not aspire to become a social worker making a living on the social and medical ills of our Community. Be an entrepreneur; concentrate on economic wealth thereby contributing training, employment and growth in our communities”.

Jo-Ann’s hopes for Family and Community are: Life, Health, Happiness, Luck, Liberty, Peace and Prayer.

Last comment: Infiltrate don’t assimilate.

Jordana Veen

Date & place of birth: Edmonton 1989 - 19 years of age

Ethnic origin: / Ancestral history: Dutch, Cree

Current family (i.e. married, common law, single) common law,
1 son age 1 - Desmond

Earliest/fondest childhood memories: Best memory was when her brother was born, as I was six years of age. The school got a phone call, told her she had to go home. Her Aunty drove her to hospital to see her brother.

Do you currently or did your family of origin actively practice tradition? How?

No potential? She was native until recently where family settled. From coming to partners she started getting into tradition. In junior high she went to her first sweat and also had to pick it upon her own. What teaching of resiliency that has evolved from your journey would you like to impart for this project? Dad did not talk a lot about family, her grandpa as she did know him for a short time of 44 years they being Native became very close. The birthing of her one-year-old son being a single parent. It was really difficult to survive.

Educational/training & professional background: Grade 12 – used to volunteer at Church – Vacation Bible camp a couple of years.

What were some of the greatest lessons of your life? Jordana did not think much about her family. After becoming pregnant she realized the importance of family. Family is always going to be the one to back you.

Were there role model's or agencies that impacted your life? If yes how?

Grandma (Omah) – Dutch she went through so much overcame breast cancer twice.

If you have any words of advise for the younger generation what would that be?

Stay true to yourself. When you try to be someone you are not its easier to get into situations that are hard to get out of.

What are you wishes for your family and community?

Community gets the violence out of it. Many things that go on where fighting is not talked or dealt with.

Additional Information:

Family wishes: For my son/brother to get their education and to stay away from harms of life. For herself she wishes to be happy and also go to college in the area of nursing or business degree and open up a tattoo shop.



Kayla Boisvert

Date & place of birth: Edmonton

Ethnic origin: / Ancestral history: French/Cree

Current family (i.e. married, common law, single) dating – 1 child – Tayona – 17 months youngest of family of 3 kids in family, brothers in jail, Kayla has ADO but does not let it affect her.

Earliest/fondest childhood memories: 1st trampoline was much fun and getting stung by a bumblebee.

Do you currently or did your family of origin actively practice tradition? How? Smudging and prayer at home.

What teaching of resiliency that has evolved from your journey would you like to impart for this project? Transferred across the street ad house burnt down in December 28, 2007 daughter 3 days old ad 9 people in the house. She recalls getting frost bitten and it happened at 9:11 a.m. Fire detectors did not go off. Someone set the house on fire with gas. Her dad threw the barbeque running into a burning house to help save the entire block. Lived in hotel for 4 months. Fat food everyday. Never missed school, made honors, people amazed by her ability to survive the tragedy, I excelled in school, at the same time. Finished grade 10 and 11 had her daughter and survived house fire.

Educational/training & professional background: St. Francis School and reads to grade 1 and 2 Cree students. Grade 12 currently and graduation June. Aspires to be a social worker applying at Grant MacEwan.

What were some of the greatest lessons of your life? Live life serious but laugh along the way. Life to short to live with regrets and grudges. At 15 years of age Kayla had her daughter – that changed her life. She does not hold grudges against her ex-boyfriend for leaving after 6 years.

Were there role model's or agencies that impacted your life? If yes how? Dad is a role model inspired her to never give up. Dad said “can't” be a mom and a pot head, dopes are for dopers” It a want not a need. Dad used to abuse drugs, alcohol but quit once he had kids. Life is better Dad is now our executive.

If you have any words of advise for the younger generation what would that be?

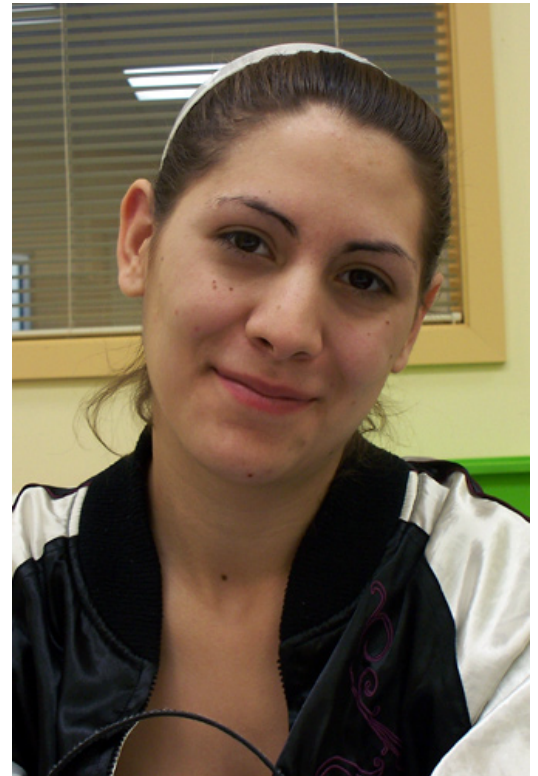
Don't let people say you can't do it, be who you want to be.

What are you wishes for your family and community?

Family wishes wants to make everyone proud. Commitment to school went daily even when daughter was sick. Never give up when the going gets tough.

Additional Information:

To the Community – two wrongs don't make it right.



Larisa Kreider

Born: Edmonton, Alberta

Ethnic Origin: Métis

My birth name is Kimberly Dawn Cardinal. My biological parents are from the Lac La Biche and Wabasca area.

Current family: I am single and have three daughters.

Earliest/fondest memories:

One of my earliest or significant memories was when I came to the understanding that I was aboriginal and adopted by my Caucasian family. My adoptive parents had previously told me that I was adopted but I did not identify with it yet. When I was about five years old, I had been playing with my friends outside when we started teasing each other. One girl, who was also aboriginal, informed me that I was aboriginal as well. I went home crying to my father and he confirmed this by saying “of course your aboriginal”. This was a turning point where I understood that I was different from my Caucasian family who adopted me. It was a shock but it was the beginning of the formation of my aboriginal identity.



Do you currently or did your family of origin actively practice tradition? How?

Being adopted by a Caucasian family, I was not raised in the aboriginal culture. I began to follow the aboriginal traditions when I began my healing journey from the past. I began getting in touch with my culture when I was 20 years old. Not knowing my family, I was not familiar with my culture. Therefore, I needed to find out where and who I came from. In order to find my cultural identity, I need to find my biological family. I found my biological mother when I was 20 years old. This was the day I had dreamt of. I remember crying while growing up, thinking that I would never find her. If it weren't for the Native Network News at that time, I probably still wouldn't have known her. It was totally fate the way we met, and will save it for another story one day! I am the oldest in my biological family with four siblings. I needed to find out where I came from in order for me to move forward in life. I needed all those answers to my questions. I realized after meeting my mother that she attended residential school and felt she didn't know how to look after a baby. She felt that giving me up for adoption was the only way she could provide a good life for me. I can now understand why it was necessary. Most of my questions were answered eventually over the years and we still keep in contact. My biological mother does not practice aboriginal culture due to past experiences and therefore, was unable to teach me anything. I had to learn on my own. I sought out cultural events, spoke with Elders, and participated in cultural ceremonies. I currently practice tradition and I am constantly learning more about the culture. My youngest daughter attends an Aboriginal enriched school and I am learning the Cree language through her. I am reclaiming my culture and language back.

What teaching of resiliency that has evolved from your journey would you like to impart for this project?

Being a single mother on social assistance when I was twenty years old motivated me to going back to school. This was a pivotal point in my life as I was determined to make a different life for the sake of my children. I realized that it was not just about me anymore. I didn't want my children to be raised in poverty; I wanted something better for all of us. This is when I realized I needed to go back to school. Going to school allowed me to grow both professionally but mostly personally. My values and beliefs began to shape more fully; I was on a healing journey that was also educational.

Educational/training & professional background/volunteering:

In order for me to be accepted into the Grant MacEwan College (GMC) Social Work program, I needed to upgrade. I didn't have a high school diploma, so I went to obtain my GED. This was difficult but knew I had to do it if I was ever to get ahead. I also had to upgrade my English. In addition, I had to have a minimum of 100 hours of volunteer experience. I signed up for the volunteering training with WIN House, a shelter for abused woman. Since I too had experienced abuse in a previous relationship, I felt I wanted to assist other women. Volunteering at WIN house for me was a test for myself, to see if I was able to move forward from the past. I remember asking the volunteer coordinator if I was ready. She assured me I was. I managed to obtain over 500 hours of volunteer work, well over the requirement. So I applied. For the four consecutive years that applied to the GMC Social Work program, I was not accepted. I began to think that I wasn't able or didn't belong in College, that maybe I shouldn't be a social worker. During those four years, I tried to stay focused and not get too discouraged. I took university transfer courses part-time, every year I wasn't accepted. I did fairly well at these, which increased my self-confidence. I thought to myself, if I can do these courses than surely I could handle college. I knew that GMC was just a stepping-stone. After my third attempt, I decided to take a program at Métis Child and Family Services that would give me my 1st year of social work. I loved this program, it allowed me not only to aim towards social work but also begin to understand my aboriginal history. I received a certificate for the Family Intervention/Youth Support Training Program. It wasn't until the 5th year that I finally became accepted into Grant MacEwan. I obtained a Diploma in Social Work and then went on to University, as I had already obtained most of my university transfer courses. I finished my Bachelor of Social Work through the University of Victoria over three years while working full time. I received honors with distinction at the university. I managed to utilize bursaries to complete all my studies in college and university and therefore, did not need to take out a student loan. I am currently a Registered Social Worker with the Alberta College of Social Workers and employed as a social worker with the City of Edmonton, working on community development. Currently my special interests are Aboriginal and homelessness issues.

Were there role model's or agencies that impacted your life? How?

One of my role models was my adoptive mother, she managed to escape abuse and become a strong independent woman. She was a single mother and very supportive. I saw the strength in her, which inspired me. Much of what I have done is because I saw my mother doing it. Another mentor I had was a City social worker, Jenny Kain. I met Jenny when I was working at Kara Family Resource Centre. She had asked me if I was interested in developing an Aboriginal women's group and our relationship grew from there. She supported me through the years while applying for school by writing reference letters and encouraging me to not give up. I admired her job in community development work. I did field placements with the City during my schooling, so became quite aware of what type of work it was. It became my dream job and now I'm doing it. Support was crucial when it came to being able to accomplish what I did. My mother encouraged me and babysat my children often. My father always stressed, "Education is Key" and to "Keep Going"!

If you have any words of advice for the younger generation what would that be?

Believe in yourself no matter what your life has been up to now whether positive or negative. You can use it to your advantage. Follow your passion and be persistent and determined. Try to complete your education before you have families as then you can provide a better quality of life for your children. “Nothing is impossible”.

What are your wishes for your family and community?

For my family, it would be to seek further education for a better quality of life when they raise their families. I would like to see the urban Aboriginal community to become strong in Edmonton. This includes being educated and addressing issues so we can have a better quality of life in Edmonton.

Additional Information:

I knew that the best people to understand Aboriginal issues were the Aboriginal people themselves. My life experiences provided me with the framework to collaborate with other people who experience similar issues. I knew Aboriginal social workers were needed and there was a lack of us. Since I had life experience, I felt it was the right career for me. There are so many areas of social work in which one can work and we're needed in all of them. Hiy Hiy.

Larson Jay Yellowbird

Place of birth: Wetaskiwin Alberta

Ethnic Origin/Ancestral history:

I am from the Samson Cree Nation. I grew up with my family on the Louis Bull reserve and I am the oldest of five children. I am currently married and my wife and I have four children ages nine, seven, five and one year old.

Earliest/fondest childhood memories:

One of my fondest memories was going to South Dakota with my father and grandfather to the Sundance trails. These are special times with my family learning about tradition.

I also remember Christmases with my family. My father would dress up like Santa Claus for us and we would have fun exchanging gifts. Ski dooing was also an enjoyable past time during the winters back home.



Do you currently or did your family of origin actively practice tradition? How?

I partake in every ceremony that comes along in the community. I am a fancy dancer and my family and I all dance and follow the pow wow trail every year in Canada and the US.

One of my goals is to study Cree language more thoroughly. My parents spoke Cree when I was growing up and I have a good understanding of the language but I would like to be able to speak it more fluently. Someday I would also like to obtain my “Degree in Spirituality.” Spirituality is essential in life and I would like to continue down this path of learning.

What teaching of resiliency that has evolved from your journey would you like to impart for this project?

Growing up on the reserve, I saw others battle with drugs and alcohol, poverty, unemployment and hardship. For myself, I have been alcohol and drug free for eight years and believed that the best way for me to lead a more balanced life was to leave the reserve. Initially it was difficult to move away from the reserve but I wanted to pursue an education. I moved to the city, met my wife and now we live on her reserve, Alexander First Nation. I commute to NAIT everyday. I gained a lot of knowledge from observing other’s life experiences which in turn assisted me with making good choices.

Educational/training & professional background: & volunteering:

I am currently a student at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT). I am studying toward a Bachelor of Technology in Technology Management which will be completed next year. Originally, I completed an Engineering Design and Drafting Technology diploma at NAIT, worked for a year with ATCO Gas and then decided to pursue my degree. I might go back and work a summer job with ATCO Electric. My long term goal is to obtain a masters degree and then work as a tribal engineer on the Samson reserve. mI like to volunteer in my community and I assist at the NAIT open houses. At home, I help out wherever I can such as chopping wood for Elders and being involved in ceremonies.

What were some of the greatest lessons of your life?

Some of the hardest lessons in life make you more self aware. At the time of the lesson, it can be very tough but later on there is strong insight to be gained.

I also have to emphasize the importance of not taking one's parents for granted. Take the time to listen to your Elders, grandparents and father's teachings about tradition and spirituality. It is important to be connected to our cultural history.

Were there role model's or agencies that impacted your life?

My current role models are my wife's sister, Jodi Arcand and brother in law, Clayton Kootney. They encourage and motivate both myself and my wife to pursue our education. Jodi and Clayton have come a long way themselves from being struggling students to having great jobs, security and a home on the reserve.

If you have any words of advice for the younger generation what would that be?

My advice to the younger generation would be "don't let alcohol and drugs bring you down. Education is key to First Nations people." There are lots of opportunities in industry for Aboriginal people if you pursue it.

What are your wishes for your family and community?

My dreams for my family and everyone are to live a happy long life and have grey hair. I hope that our language becomes stronger and that tradition is maintained throughout generations. For youth, I would like to see them obtain education and live a balanced life with tradition.

Lloyd Yellowbird

Date and place of birth/Ethnic origin/Current Family

I was born in Edmonton and I am Cree from the Alexander Reserve. My mother raised me and my four siblings in Edmonton. Currently, my wife and I have been married for eight years and we have three children. We recently purchased our first house in Edmonton.

Earliest/fondest memories/traditional practice

My earliest memories are of the cultural influences that occurred in my life. The culture was readily accessible on Alexander First Nation. I remember my childhood filled with pow wows, sweat lodge ceremonies, smudging and teachings from the Elders. One particular memory was when I was attending a pow wow with my mother and an old man approached us and put his hand on my head. The old man stated that I was going to grow up and be a powerful and respectful man. I see this as meaning that I will be a leader.

I am a grass dancer and have been dancing in pow wows since I was four years old. I enjoy spending every summer with my family pow wow dancing. I also teach traditional dance to youth through the White Buffalo Society.

My grandfather is a pipe carrier and medicine man. As a child, Cree was spoken in my home; however, my grandmother encouraged me to learn other languages. She emphasized the significance of learning other languages to communicate with others. I am currently learning French as my wife is from France.

What teaching of resiliency that has evolved from your journey would you like to impart for this project?

When it comes to imparting teachings of resiliency, I recall being impatient and having a lack of discipline as a youth. It took time for me to learn to meet others half way and see things from their perspective. Growing up, I knew my father; however, my father often traveled and was not involved much in my life. The lack of a father role in my life was replaced by teachings of Elders. I view difficulties in life as a challenge or a test of knowledge.

Educational training & professional background & volunteering

I am currently the Aboriginal Student Advisor for the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT). I am doing a contract position until March with the possibility of staying on. I completed three years of psychology through Grant MacEwan College and then took a year off to work with NAIT.



I am also the program coordinator for the White Buffalo Society. This includes doing proposal writing, teaching dance and networking with other people. We lost our funding this year for the first time and I am currently exploring other sources of funding to keep the program going.

From 1987 to 2003, I worked and was paid as a dancer for the American Indian Dance Theatre. The company is based out of New York. We toured from September to early December, February to April and then for a bit in May. I went to the Middle East, Europe, Australia, Japan, and all over North America. We attended different music festivals and theatres performing traditional Indigenous dancing/culture. I considered myself as an ambassador for my people.

I started with the dance company when I was 18 years old. I had been pow wow dancing in the states when the company was recruiting dancers for their show. A drumming group recommended me to the dance theatre as a potential candidate. One day I was talking on the phone with the recruiter and the next thing I knew I was in dancing in Colorado Springs putting together a show. It involved long hours of traveling on a bus to different cities. I would listen to my walkman on the bus and watch the land go by.

What were some of your greatest lessons in life?

I am too young to answer that question (laughs). It would be to appreciate life for what it has to offer and just being alive. Family is the #1 thing.

Were there role models or agencies that impacted your life?

I have two role models who impacted my life and they are my mother and grandmother. They modeled this through their dedication to the family and their love to us children. My grandmother taught me how to cook and sew. I rarely ever saw either one of them get mad. My mother once told me that she was happier in life without money than with it. Her message was that material things will not make you happy. The older people have a way of teaching that was sometimes hard to understand at first. It is like you have to interpret the meaning of what is being said. Sometimes you understand it more clearly later in life.

My advice for the younger generation would be Believe in yourself. Youth are trying to find their way in life by fitting in with this group or other. It is important for them to learn about their culture.

What are your wishes for your family and community?

My wishes for my family are to maintain our strong foundation as a family. My wife is my best friend and we love teaching our children daily. I cherish the time spent daily with my wife in the mornings and evenings after work. It is important for us to make the time to connect daily as it is a strong foundation for our relationship.

A wish for my community would be able to start my own dance company and have community workshops on the theatrical component of dancing. The spiritual teachings are essential.

Additional Information:

I believe that everything happens for a reason that there is a purpose for everything. Role models can go a long way in people's lives. I was also nominated as father of the year and this is displayed at Canada Place.

Marggo Pariseau

I was born in High Prairie, Alberta into a French/Métis family. My father is French from Donnelly and my mother is Métis. My current family status is single.

Earliest/fondest childhood memories:

I remember the rivers being beautiful and the grass being lush and green. There was no industry that I could remember back then and we had no running water or electricity.

One of my earliest and fondest memories was of following my Kokum all day long while she went about her chores. My Kokum rarely spoke to me. Our strong bond was formed through our daily interactions. I remember one time we were picking berries together and we noticed a bear right beside her. My Kokum did not react and just carried on with picking her berries while the bear ate berries. My Kokum always kept busy whether it was berry picking, gardening, collecting water or tanning hides. I also recall watching her skillfully tan hides. One time when I was watching her, she put her knife down to do something else. I decided that I was going to help her out by scraping the hides. When my Kokum returned, there were several holes in the hide she was working on. She never did yell or punish me for doing that.

Another specific memory I have is of this one house in the village that was so affluent looking. I was fascinated by that house every time I saw it. One day while I was walking by that house, there were children playing outside and the owner invited everyone in for a snack including me. He started talking to me in Cree and then I responded, then he spoke in French and I responded again then we conversed in English. Afterwards, he said to the rest of the children “see if you become as smart as her maybe you will someday leave this town and become something”. His words left a strong impression on me.

Do you currently or did your family of origin actively practice tradition? How?

I enjoy story telling, praying, and spirituality. I honor the stories of the old people.

What teaching of resiliency that has evolved from your journey would you like to impart for this project?

My resilience comes from my mother. When I was five years old, the home that we lived in burnt down. Later, another one of our houses burnt down. We lost everything both times and my mother kept right on going doing what she had to do. There was no emphasis on material things as no one was hurt. My mother could make a home anywhere as long as it she could keep it clean. Of course the community was very helpful and resourceful back then. After the first fire, we actually lived in a granary for awhile and in tents for the summer.

Educational/training & professional background: & volunteering (helping out)

I have thirty-five years experience of doing front line work. For twenty-two years, I worked at the Women’s Emergency Accommodation Centre. I was a manager at the shelter. I also have ten years experience as a family support worker. I have been with the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women for three years doing advocacy work. There have been numerous boards and committees that I was involved in over the years.



What were some of the greatest lessons of your life?

Don't hang on to anything you can never own. You cannot own people. Always be respectful to yourself first and you will know how to treat others. My father would say "don't lie, as honesty is an overrated virtue so don't lie to me".

Were there role model's or agencies that impacted your life? If yes how?

My role models were family members and community members. There were no agencies that impacted my life.

If you have any words of advice for the younger generation what would that be?

My words would be "learn to be proud of who you are and embrace your culture". "Know who you are".

What are you wishes for your family and community?

My wishes for others are to let go and deal with addictions by finding different avenues to cope with hardships and disappointment. "Take responsibility for yourself".

Additional Information:

With the younger generation, I would rather see them involved in their own culture rather than embracing the other cultures. The Native culture has a rich legacy that needs to be passed on to our future generations.

Mary Trottier

I am of Métis. I was born in Edmonton and grew up in St. Albert, Alberta. My mother grew up in B.C. and spent at least three years in residential school. When she came to Edmonton at age 16, she met and married my father.

My Father's family was from the Michelle band in Callihoo. That entire band enfranchised in 1950 and so the reserve was disbanded at that time. His grandfather and uncles were very good farmers, were fairly well to do while on the reserve and later owned farmland in Stony Plain and Spruce Grove.

My grandmother owned some property in St Albert and my father grew up in that community.

Both of my parents always worked and so the work ethic was quite firmly ingrained in us kids as we were growing up.

I am married. My grand daughter currently lives with me since the age of one year (she is now 16 years old) and I have one grown son.

Some of my happiest memories include sleeping with my grandmother. I felt safe and comforted with her. We also spent time gardening and picking berries and medicines and she taught me to pray. Her English was not very good so the stories she told were sometimes told haltingly. But they were good anyways. I loved to hear her talk.

I currently practice some traditional spiritual ceremonies such as smudging, pipe ceremonies and attend round dances, sweats. I have also participated in a Fast. I am a deeply spiritual person and rely on Creator to get through most of the struggles in my life.

It seems as though one simply responds to what happens in one's life by doing whatever one has to do to keep moving in a positive direction. Perhaps that is the greatest lesson!

I have worked since I was fifteen years old. I have worked in a variety of settings. First, as a summer time babysitter for my cousin while she worked, then I worked in a carwash and as a waitress in various settings. After I finished high school, I took a course in office reception and got a job at Native Counseling Services of Alberta as a receptionist. I worked as the receptionist for approximately one year and then took a job as a Family Court worker. Native Counseling Services provided on the job training and various courses to ensure that I had the skills to do the job well. I worked for that agency for almost 10 years moving from front line to supervision and then to staff training. I learned how to research, develop and field test several training programs. At the time I also became quite involved with child welfare, foster parenting and developed a "Native Awareness" program that was delivered to social workers, foster parents and correctional services.



After that, I went to work in a hotel and became the Assistant Manager within the first year. I learned to work in private industry and took various sales and marketing courses to develop my skills so that I could promote the hotel to various groups requiring longer-term accommodations in our city. My next job was as Assistant Manager in a ladies retail fashion store at WEM. I enjoyed my work there because it made women feel better about themselves, and to be well dressed.

The next job I held was as an Employment Counselor working with ex-offenders who were attempting to re-integrate into the community. I developed the life management program and assisted with employment placements for these individuals. I went from there to Edmonton John Howard Society doing the same type of work and then went to work for the Aboriginal Centre for Employment Strategies. While I was working there, I met an individual who was setting up a training program for Aboriginal people to enter the trades. He offered me a job developing the training and assessment procedures for his company. Over a three-year period, I managed the training and placement segment of the program and was instrumental in obtaining three major contracts to deliver services to different Aboriginal communities within the province. Within three and a half years after a six month sabbatical, I went back to work for Native Counseling Services on contract delivering life skills for their apprenticeship training program and then began working with the FLIP program as a facilitator. This was like a step back in time for me because I was working for NCSA when the FLIP program started. Although it had grown and changed, the principles remained the same. I worked with them for another year. I came to work at Bissell Centre in April 2005, where I have been Manager of the Employment Services program for the past three years.

I feel like this is a question that one might ask my grandmother! I need to look back on my life and think about the greatest lessons. For some reason none of the lessons I learned seem like very great lessons at all at this moment. Perhaps I simply take those lessons for granted.

I mean, the lessons I take for granted are the ones where you learn about honesty, integrity, responsibility for self and family. Doesn't every kid learn these things from their parents and grandparents?

The greatest lesson is that I don't know everything despite what my experience has taught me.

Secondly, I am not always right!

And thirdly, it is not necessary to fill every silence with noise of some kind. Being comfortable with silence promotes spiritual well being.

The role models that impacted my life during my younger years the most were my Father, my Mother and my grandmother. From them, I learned the lessons of family and the value of being a good person. I also learned my basic values and what I would have to do to survive as an adult. strengths, to build my self-esteem and self-confidence and encouraged me in the area of lifelong learning.

My other role model was my mother in law, who taught me to be gracious as I fought for what I believed was right.

Advice for the younger generation... What I have learned about the younger generation is that they seldom wish to hear advice from the older generation. Particularly if we (the older generation) are very sure of the accuracy of the information we are providing. I can only say to them what my father said to me.

That is: "Listen to what I am saying. You may not think that I know what I am talking about right now. But you will understand my words at another time in your life. Listen to it. Remember it. You may use it down the road."

From those words, I learned to listen carefully to what was being said, to think about it and to store it for future reference.

I wish peace, joy, laughter and prosperity for my family. For my community, I wish the same.

Minnie Freeman

Date & place of birth: Cape Hope Island, James Bay

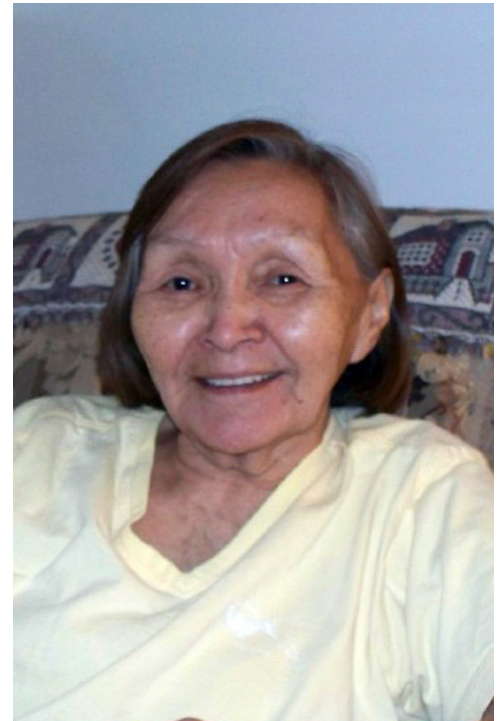
Ethnic origin: / Ancestral history: Inuit

Current family (i.e. married, common law, single) married 46 years, 3 children all grown up, 8 grand children

Earliest/fondest childhood memories: Holding on mothers hand going berry picking and she died that summer. Mini was only 3 years of age. It was so significant as it was one of her last memories of her mom.

Do you currently or did your family of origin actively practice tradition? How?

Minnie's grandparents her up after mom died and was very exposed to the traditional lifestyle of her culture: hunting, language, crafts until she went to residential schools



What teaching of resiliency that has evolved from your journey would you like to impart for this project?

. At 5 years of age she was kidnapped off the beach, 8 years residential schools. She did very well as the Inuk kids always listened and doing the obeying as this was a survival tool that she utilized to overcome many of her troubling times.

Educational/training & professional background:

Minnie's first job was being a translator for government 1956 first came south. She also had training for nursing however father pulled her out of school (to get married). Father guided boats. Grand mother sent her back when dad went away. Grandma was very strong and traditional Due to the language of Inuit was very hard for the James Bay Cree to learn the language she was forced to learn the James Bay Cree.

What were some of the greatest lessons of your life?

Minnie had no exposure to living in the south. In the north life was so different. Everything was so fascinating, tall buildings, how people worked, cars. Having children, greatest lesson, they taught Mini the most important things in life. 5 best friends very different people taught a lot of lessons, helped she would say in different ways.

Were there role model's or agencies that impacted your life? If yes how?

Grand mother was a huge impact very funny and strict. Open eyes "go out look at world". Brother would say what you looking for. About 40 years of age Mini understood what she meant. Go see different things and learn from the world – explore surroundings.

If you have any words of advise for the younger generation what would that be?

"GO OUT LOOK AT THE WORLD"

What are your wishes for your family and community?

WISH “GOOD LUCK” and try not to interfere in peoples lives. Wish all my community GOOD LUCK, what will be will be.

Additional Information:

Involvement in community participate in things, cannot do it for self but for a cause as volunteering really helps- example - when asked to talk to young at University students people ego. I do that all year long about Inuit culture. Book life among the Qullunaat – by Minnie Freeman Books: Northern Voices – Inuit writings in English –edited by Penny Petrone, Sharing our Experience – Canadian Advisory Council on Status of Women, A Century of Canada’s Arctic Islands – Morris Zaslow
Life Among the Qullunaat – Minnie Aodla Freeman, Marie Chez lesqullunaat – Minnie Aodla Freeman, Writers
Discovering Canada – edited by Carol Martin.

Rob Papin

Was born in the early 1970's in Edmonton, Alberta at the Charles Campsell Hospital.
Rob is of Cree/Lakota ancestry.

Current family (common law, single) common law, 4 children – Tyreek 8 yrs, Trayann 7 years, Jadeen 5 years, Robbie Jr. 4 years, Dre 4 years

Earliest/fondest childhood memories: Getting away from home ½ mile from home Enoch best friends place. Great place to escape from various abuses.

Do you currently or did your family of origin actively practice tradition? How?

Participate in Sundance, doctoring ceremonies, pipe ceremonies

What teaching of resiliency that has evolved from your journey would you like to impart for this project?

What I was taught to believe in was to stand for what you believe in regardless of lateral violence. Never to play the victim, never to buy into victims and never to create victims.

Educational/training & professional background:

3 years criminal justice – Lethbridge and Search of Warrior Facilitator Certificate. 1 year of Neichi – lot of years of common sense.

What were some of the greatest lessons of your life?

“Birth of my children without them I would not be where I am at. Helped me to find identify part of bigger traditional values and beliefs.

Were there role model's or agencies that impacted your life? If yes how?

Maggie Hodgson/Joe Coutorellie, Richards/Allan Benson, Leonard Cardinal, late Joe Cardinal. They all taught me it was “okay” to be comfortable in my own skin and how to confront fear.

If you have any words of advise for the younger generation what would that be?

Always fight for what you believe in regardless what the situation is and never give up. Learn cultural values and believes. Those tools will help to survive in today's society.

What are you wishes for your family and community?

Stop lateral violence – daily fight and start helping each other and walk the talk instead of lip service.



Russell Everett

I was almost born in a plane, a boat and finally in a hospital at Ile-a-la-crosse, Saskatchewan on September 28, 1966 as they rushed my mother to the nearest hospital from Patuanak, Saskatchewan. It was a Wednesday and I believe in the afternoon after an agonizing 36 hour labour, which my mom would remind me of at times. I am the second oldest of cousins on my Mothers side, which we identify as Dene with some Cree and we bit of Scottish as well, and the fifth oldest on my Fathers side which is Ojibway.

My greatest influences are my mom and dad. As young children we spoke Dene and English to my mother and only English to my father. We stopped speaking Dene in the household when we moved off of a Dene reserve. My father was one of a handful of Native Hudson Bay Managers, and as such we traveled a lot staying as short as 6 months in a Native community to 2 years the longest posting. This was of distinct disadvantage later when we moved to a municipality, where it was discovered half way through grade 2, that I couldn't read or write. I guess I was ignored by the reserve teachers since I was the only native child in school that could speak English, so assumptions were made that I could also read and write. This was the beginning of my greatest quest, that still continues today which is to educate myself.



My education has been intense and very lengthy to most standards I would say. This quest began when in grade 2, I was placed in remedial class along with another native girl and boy, we grew up together in a very small room with one on one tutelage. It wasn't until grade 6 that I was allowed to be in the same classes as my other friends. Perhaps this created some feelings of inadequacy and insecurity in my abilities. In one system I was praised because I could speak English and in another system I was chastised because I couldn't read or write. My quest for education was further spurred in grade 12.

In grade 12, actually well before I considered going to university, my parents constantly hounded me, asking me questions like, "what am I going to do", "what am I going to become". My standard answer was to be an artist, a wonderful pursuit of enlightenment and expression. Well my dad had one word for me, "BILLS". The deal with my parents was this, as long as I was in university they would support me, but as soon as I was done that was it, no more financial favours, no more bumming off of mom and dad as it were – taking them for granted that is.

Well 9 years after grade 12, I finally graduated from the Technical University of Nova Scotia with a Masters in Architecture. I then spent another 10 years as an intern or apprentice before I could actually call myself an architect. That is 31 years in some form of education, mind you the last 10 years I was getting paid so the motivation was a little more rewarding, such as it was. In 2003 I started my own architectural practice and 2008 will mark my fifth year on my own as a sole proprietor.

My earliest memories were in most part extremely joyful, fond and full of love and caring, yet in all that I came out feeling insecure, inadequate and different. My youth was tough, I felt different when I was on the various reserves in Northern Canada, not because I was native but because I was an English speaking native, and when we moved off reserve it hit home even harder because i was a different colour then most and to boot, I was considered a special ed student because I was grouped in with the other “remedial” children. Those feelings, I realize I still carry with me and they manifest themselves in different ways.

The message in all this I guess is that success is not measured with how many degrees you have, how much money you make, how long you have been married, how many kids you have, or if you own your own company but rather if you are a happy person surrounded by people that love and care for you. Work towards your ambitions, but don't sacrifice the feelings of loved ones, friends, family and most especially yourself!

Enjoy life and be kind, laugh at the right moment and dance like no one is looking.

Russ in summation is an English speaking Dene from Northern Saskatchewan that currently calls Edmonton home and a permanent resident of planet Earth.

Sandra Skare

Place of Birth: Edson, Alberta

Ethnic Origin: I am Cree and Norwegian and belong to the Waterhen Lake First Nation in Saskatchewan. I am also a descendent of the Papaschase Band.

Current family: I am single and have three beautiful daughters. Their names are Samantha who is 18 years old, Selena, who is 12 years old and Shayla who is 11 years old. They are my precious treasures.

Earliest/fondest childhood memories:

I remember feeling secure in knowing that I belonged to a large family and knowing that they would be always be around...

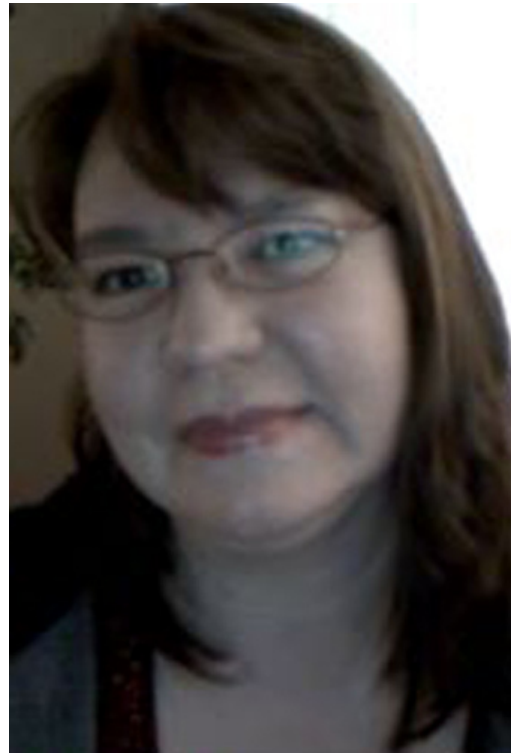
When I was about 3 1/2 years old, I remember riding a horse named "Strawberry" in a field. My cousin slapped Strawberry on the butt and the next thing I knew she took off with me still on her back! My cousin yelled at me to jump off and eventually I did, but had to figure out how I was going to do it because I didn't have the courage to slide off. As Strawberry was galloping through the field, I decided to try and mimic a cowboy in a movie that I had seen. You know, that cowboy made doing a somersault off of the back of a galloping horse look so easy! Anyway, I ended up with a bump or two but remember feeling very proud of myself!

Do you currently or did your family of origin actively practice tradition?

When my mother married my father they moved from Saskatchewan to Alberta where my dad's family lived. Before that, my mother lived on the Waterhen Lake reserve with her family (between attending residential school). Traditional ways were entrenched in our daily lives so we learned without even realizing the rich teachings that we got from the way my mother raised us. We thought everyone knew how to shoot a 22, snare rabbits, and maneuver a canoe... Anyway, my mother is fluent in Cree and I understand some. I plan to learn more Cree soon through both classroom and emersion experiences starting this year.

What teaching of resiliency that has evolved from your journey would you like to impart for this project?

Setting goals was the first step in my journey. The second step was believing that I had what it took to reach those goals. I began to realize that with each success or failure that I experienced, there was something to be learned so I used what I learned to create even better experiences. I'm still learning!



Educational/training & professional background & volunteering

If someone had asked me back in high school what I would be doing in 10 years, I wouldn't have known. I didn't know what fields of work I could get into or if I was smart enough to succeed at anything. Opportunities have a way of showing themselves and opening doors for us when we least expect it though.

In my early 20's, I moved to Whitehorse, Yukon and after working in dead-end jobs for a few years, I decided to enroll in the Yukon Native Teacher Education Program through a partnership with Yukon College and the University of Regina. Samantha was five at the time and I had my two other daughters Shayla and Selena in years three and four of the program. I treated my education like my job and was able to graduate with distinction. The feeling of success after earning my B.Ed. prompted me to begin thinking about further formal education so after teaching for a number of years on reserves in northern Alberta, moved my girls to UBC for two years while I completed my masters degree. Now I hold a Masters degree in Educational Psychology from UBC and plan to work towards my PhD... eventually!

I enjoy my current position as Senior Education Manager with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Services, Alberta Education. In keeping with the spirit of lifelong learning, I also enjoy teaching a psychology course at Yellow head Tribal College in Edmonton. Knowledge keeps us strong.

What were some of your greatest lessons in life?

My greatest revelation in life was when I realized that there are many ways to view the world around me and that my perspective was and is a valid one.

Were there role models or agencies that impacted your life? How?

There were a couple of teachers who I remember as being fair and kind...I remember Mr. May was my grade 6 teacher in Edson, and Mrs. Road was my grade 10 art teacher in Ardrossan. When I went into college, it was like being a part of a big family. Being in an Aboriginal cohort group with other students was the best! Of course without the support of Waterhen Lake First Nation, I wouldn't be where I am today.

If you had any words of advice for the younger generation what would that be?

Strive to stay in school! Without your education, life's choices are very limited.

Seek out a mentor in your life who can help you along.

Stay positive, things always have a way of working out!

What are your wishes for your family and community?

I wish for my family and community to be (and stay) healthy. I hope residential school doesn't take seven generations to guide us back to where we were before.

Additional Information:

Everyone should have equal opportunities in life.

I would also like to acknowledge Lise Robinson for inviting me to share my story. It was a pleasure!

Sharon M. Whitford

Sharon was born at the home of the river valley in 1949 in Edmonton near the Muttart Conservatory is of the Cree and Scottish ancestry.

Current family (i.e. married, common law, single, No Children)

Earliest/fondest childhood memories: Grandmothers back yard looking at the McDonald Hotel prior to all the high rises. Grandpa made and played fiddles. Sharon has her own fiddle and learnt to play later in life. .

Do you currently or did your family of origin actively practice tradition? How?

The Elders in Northeast Alberta were instrumental in helping in understanding the culture and ceremonies.

What teaching of resiliency that has evolved from your journey would you like to impart for this project?

The true good medicine spirit of community helped in learning to live a healthy lifestyle. Having a vision and learning to live my higher value gives me the resiliency and strength in life.

Educational/training & professional background: & volunteering (helping out)

Art Colleges, NLP - Neuro Linguistic Programming. Using words effectively. Working with youth in care. Chef

What were some of the greatest lessons of your life?

Re-discovering the value of being creative in life. Friendship old and new is a rediscovery process to.

Were there role model's or agencies that impacted your life? If yes how?

My learning has come from my ancestors, Elders and teachers.

If you have any words of advise for the younger generation what would that be?

Learning to listen, share and trusting the learning process.



What are your wishes for your family and community?

Having respect for self has a ripple effect I like throwing pebble into water.

Grizzly bear story: Sharon was working in a camp south of Johanson Lake. Sharon went Out fishing one quiet morning and suddenly she heard a ruffling in the bushes. A Majestic grizzly bear came down the opposite bank and stood on his hind legs she Thought to herself what a privilege to see this grizzly bear. When she looked behind she Heard a loud ker- plaush and he was swimming half way across. So Sharon dropped the Tackle box, ran further, dropped fishing rod, ran further dropped down the vest. When Sharon turned around the grizzly stopped to smell what she had left behind, the tackle Box, fishing rod and down vest. She than proceeded to run really fast a quarter mile to

The camp. Once Sharon entered the trailer she called in to the Germans Landing 50 miles Away to let them know that she had just been chased by a grizzly bear and that she was All right. During that experience she had an unexpected strategy for survival.

We all have resources to rely on. Never under-estimate the power of prayer because we are all backed by our Elders and Ancestors.

Sheila Courtorielle

Place of birth: Edmonton, Alberta

Ethnic origin: / Ancestral history: I am Cree. I have status with the Sawridge Indian Band under Bill C-31. I come from a family of thirteen children but grew up with seven siblings. My parents separated when I was about six months old. I was raised by my Kookum and Moosim. My Kookum died when I was nine years old and then I went to Prince George to live with my paternal aunt and uncle. Living with them, I was exposed to parties every weekend and I began to believe that this was normal. I recall one time my aunt waking me up in the middle of the night to meet someone but I refused. As it turned out, this person was my mother and I did end up meeting her when I was twelve years old. After meeting her, I moved in with my mother and my younger siblings at that time. I became my mother's built in babysitter for my younger siblings. Eventually, I ran away from home and I have been on my own since I was fourteen years old. I would drift from relative to relative.



Current family

I am currently married and we have three adult sons. My husband is an RCMP and so are two of my sons.

Earliest/fondest childhood memories:

I remember going on the trap line with my grandparents twice a year. My Moosim was a good provider and he would live on the trap line for months. I recall having a pet weasel that was white and playing hide and go seek. My Moosim was also a good storyteller.

In the back of our house in Old Town, Kookum had it all set up for drying meat and she was good at that. We spent many days just sitting around eating dry meat and pemmican.

Our summer holidays were spent in the bush, Kookum and Moosim hauling all us kids in the wagon and going camping for the week. Moosim would go hunting while the rest of us picked berries, both cranberries and blueberries. Our fun time was playing in the sloughs catching insects.

Do you currently or did your family of origin actively practice tradition? How?

We did not practice tradition growing up. My grandmother raised us as Catholic. I always knew I was Native and I remember my cousins teasing us about our ancestry. My first language is Cree as that is what my Kookum spoke.

It was not until my husband's job transferred us to Pincher Creek that we starting learning about tradition. This was through the Blackfoot people. We started attending sweat lodges and ceremonies. My family back home had lost the tradition a long time ago but my father did remember these ceremonies when he was younger.

What teaching of resiliency that has evolved from your journey would you like to impart for this project?

I have gone through lots of issues in my life. I had been sexually abused as a child, there were issues of abandonment from my parents, marital discord resulting from unsolved childhood issues and I was diagnosed with cancer a few years ago.

There are many wellness programs that are offered by Native Counselling Services of Alberta (NCSA) to help people look at themselves. I know these programs have helped me. My purpose is to help others by talking openly about my experience. This in turn helps others so that they don't have to struggle on their own. It helps me to be a stronger person.

Educational/training & professional background: & volunteering (helping out)

In grade eleven, I dropped out of high school. Sports had kept me involved up until then as I enjoyed basketball and volleyball. I also did track and field although it was not my favorite. There was a teacher who noticed my interest in sports and he tried to keep me involved in school by having me work at the office. He was going to adopt me at one point but that never did evolve. It was challenging to stay in school with my childhood.

After I married, I was a homemaker for awhile and then I decided that I needed to work. I enrolled and completed an administration support program. With NCSA, I have over one hundred training sessions in human services. I believe that life experience is important. Living a healthy lifestyle and being a role model to others is another form of education. At NCSA, I went from being secretary, youth courtworker, courtworker, area supervisor to now a manager.

What were some of the greatest lessons of your life?

One lesson especially in the type of work that I do is to "separate the person from the behavior". I always said that my husband being an RCMP, "he charges them and I fix them". Or it is more like he deals with the behaviour (the outside) and I deal with the inside person. Another important lesson is that "I don't take on other people's stuff".

Growing up with my relatives, I was often put down by them it is no wonder my self esteem was low back then. Many of those same relatives have quit drinking but they are now what you call a "dry drunk". I have learned that all the problems that we have in life will haunt us until we deal with it. Over the years, I have learned about myself in different ways such as I don't need a drink to have fun or give a speech. I enjoy doing things such as singing and dancing to country music and jigging.

Were there role model's or agencies that impacted your life? If yes how?

My maternal Kookum who raised me was my main role model. She instilled morals and values such as honesty. She kept us together as a family unit. Another important role model is Amanda Bouvert. She believed in me and knew that I would make a difference and succeed one day. She knew all about my family background. She hired me on at NCSA after I finished a program for Aboriginal women entering the workforce. Years later after she hired me, she showed me my first performance appraisal. It stated that my goal was to eventually do her job which I did!

If you have any words of advice for the younger generation what would that be?

There is no such thing as a perfect family and there never will be. Help yourself and love yourself in order to love others. Don't be afraid to seek help.

What are your wishes for your family and community?

My wishes are that we all unite as one. Another wish is that there is no alcohol and drug addicted people. I hope that we all are healthy and happy.

Additional Information:

It doesn't matter who the person is, it is what's inside that counts. Everyone is important in this world and they can make a difference.

I am a firm believer of health and wellness for myself and staff. At work, I have implemented health and wellness days once every couple of months. Having gone through cancer and chemotherapy, I believe in the power of the mind. As soon as I was told that I had cancer, my first reaction was "I am going to beat it". I support traditional medicinal practices and alternative therapies.

Stephanie Cardinal

Date & place of birth: 1977, Fort Mc Murray, Alberta

Ethnic origin: / Ancestral history: Métis – originally from Fort Chipewyan, Alberta

Current family situation: Single

Earliest/fondest childhood memories: At Christmas time decorating the house and going with my younger brother and Dad to cut down a tree for Christmas. Good memories with the family and grand parents spending time together.

Do you currently or did your family of origin actively practice tradition? How?

Yes, we did practice tradition through living off the land, hunting and trapping in summer/winter months.

What teaching of resiliency that has evolved from your journey would you like to impart for this project? My spirituality has helped me through life itself, through the ups and downs. I'm a firm believer that God doesn't make anything happen by mistake. There is always a reason for everything, to learn and grow from. I'm thankful for the many blessings in my life.

Educational/training & professional background: Aboriginal child and Family Services Diploma graduated in 2002 from Keyano College. I have a lot of training in the social work field. My position is a home visitation practitioner and I volunteer with Prince Charles School in the aboriginal mentoring program, going on my 4th year as a mentor.

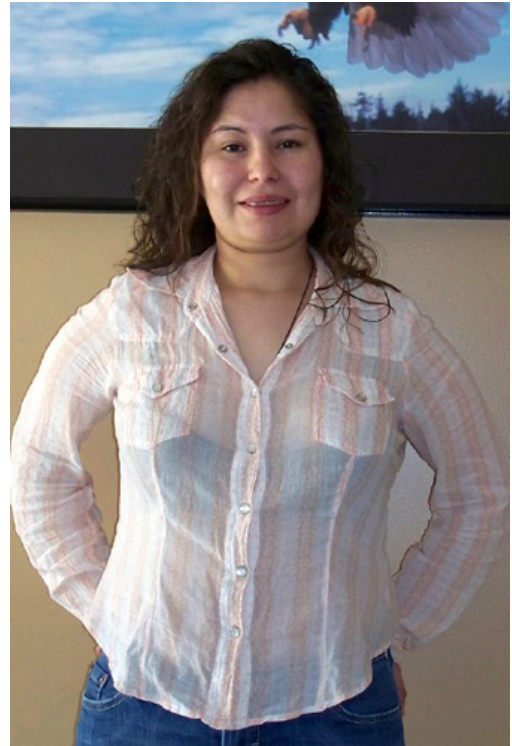
What were some of the greatest lessons of your life? Leaving my home community to get educated was very hard and it was a challenge and a struggle. It was a culture shock at first, but I learned pretty fast to adapt with society and the changes. I recently just lost both of my grand parents and that has been very tough. I embrace and honor the way they lived their life through living off the land and our traditions.

Were there role model's or agencies that impacted your life? If yes how? My grandparents, parents are my role models. Raised me to have respect, to be kind and helpful towards people. Especially my father is my hero, that gives me strength, supports me and guides me along the way. My father is my rock who keeps me grounded.

If you have any words of advice for the younger generation what would that be? To be proud of who you are as an Aboriginal person. Never loose sight of who you are, and where you come from.

What are you wishes for your family and community? To live in a safe environment and to prevent the percentage of addictions, violence and suicide rates. For my family to be safe, healthy and happy.

Additional Information: Follow your dreams. Always take time to nourish the soul and spirit and don't forget to laugh. Laughter is



Susan McKenzie

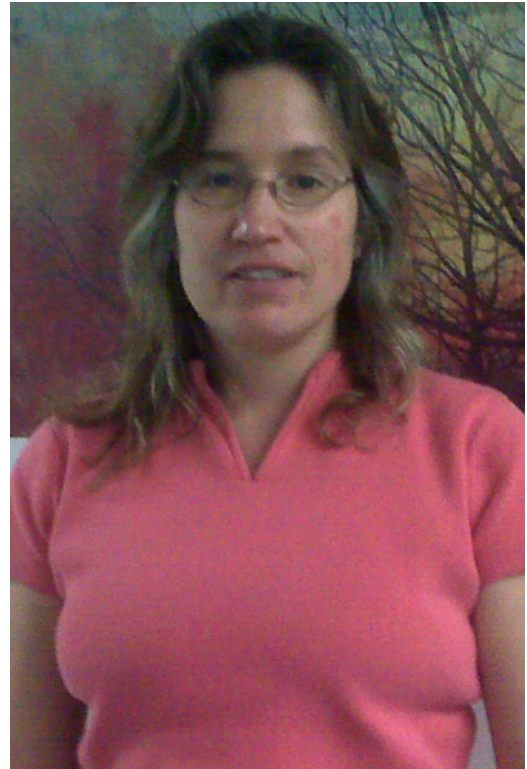
Place of Birth: Quebec City, Quebec

Ethnic Origin: I am a hybrid. I belong to the Montagnais du Lac St. Jean Band. My ancestry includes Montagnais, Atikamekw, Algonquin from my mother's side and French and Scottish from my father's side.

Family Status: I am married and together we have a daughter who is eighteen years old.

Earliest Fondest Memories:

My fondest memories would be our family camping trips. I remember the freedom of being outdoors with my siblings playing and running on the nature trails. While camping, my siblings and I were always busy whether we were wrestling with dinosaurs in the Badlands or gazing at the airplanes overhead at the Cold Lake Air show. My dad worked as a traveling salesman and during the summer, we would pack up the camping gear and go all over Alberta while he worked.



I was quite an adventurer as a child. I also recall being a patient at the U of A hospital and taking off on my tricycle from the pediatric ward. I drove my tricycle on the elevator and then found myself on the main floor of the hospital. Finally I approached a nurse who returned me to the pediatric ward. I must have been about three or four years old at the time. I think I might have been trying to make my way home.

Do you currently or did your family of origin actively practice tradition? How?

We did not practice tradition while I was growing up. My maternal grandparents were hunters and trappers and spoke a dialect of Algonquin but it was not passed on to my mother's generation. Since I grew up in Alberta, I have incorporated the Cree culture in my life. I participate in spiritual ceremonies as often as I can. Last spring, I attended a weeklong Cree Cultural camp and it was one of the most remarkable experiences of my life. I was given my Cree name, Ipsi Esquao. (Willow Woman in English). I would like to learn more of the Cree language and culture, as it is similar to the language of my grandparents. I was also raised Roman Catholic and attended the Catholic school system. I try to balance the traditional lifestyle with the present urban lifestyle.

What teaching of resiliency that has evolved from your journey would you like to impart for this project?

I come from a family with a history of addictions, mental health and abuse issues, and low income. My family of origin did not have the support of extended family as they were all out east. I believe there is someone who you can talk to when things are not going very well whether it is a friend, Elder, family member, counselor, teacher, or the Creator. When there was no one around to talk to for whatever reason, the Creator was always there for me. There is always another day or another opportunity that will come along.

Educational/training & professional background: & volunteering (helping out)

I am eager to learn new things and I am a fan of different types of learning whether it is book knowledge, school, experimental, role modeling, etc. Right now I am finishing my Bachelor of Social Work through the University of Victoria. I have a diploma in Social Work as well. I have had to work hard for my education, as I was a single parent when I attended college and I have been completing my degree part time while working full time.

In the past, I went on Canada World Youth and lived on farms in Thailand and BC. I speak Thai and want to learn more Thai and Cree. I like to take classes in art, yoga and training pertaining to social work. Learning is a life long venture.

With social work, I have experience in the area housing, family counseling, criminal justice, child welfare, addictions and mental health. My interest is in Native issues and I have worked on many First Nations and for First Nation's organizations. In the past, I have volunteered on various boards, committees and events. Currently I am volunteering for the Alberta College of Social Work conference and for the Safe Grad Committee.

What were some of the greatest lessons of your life?

At some point, I've had to let go of the negative things from the past otherwise it gnaws away at me. Both the hardships and highlights have meaning in my life. I find it essential to practice balance in my life by making sure I look after the spiritual, physical, emotional and intellectual areas.

Were there role model's or agencies that impacted your life? If yes how?

My mother as she has incredible strength and wisdom. My father as he has a strong work ethic and sense of humor. Both parents have passed these traits on to me. Numerous others as my Thai mother(s), Lillian Sparks, Denyse Martel, and Leona Love. These women have such resiliency and have supported me. Wilton Good-striker, the late Mike Steinhauer and J.P. Cardinal have been inspirational. My husband has been a great role model and loyal friend. My siblings have been influential as well because we have gone through many good and hard times together. I believe that role models come from all over. There are many youth who inspire me as well.

If you have any words of advice for the younger generation what would that be?

Listening is an art and very useful skill. It is important to spend time with Elders and hear what they have to say. I know for me it has been helpful to explore different areas in the workforce and life. I took graphic arts in high school and found out that was not for me. I have been a laborer in factories and worked in rice and cassava fields in Thailand. These are all worthwhile experiences and there is something to gain from them. Take your time finding your way if you need to. If you already know what you want to do and go straight into it, then that is great. Education in life is paramount.

What are you wishes for your family and community?

My wishes are for everyone is to live long happy and healthy lives. Not just physically healthy but emotionally and spiritually healthy as well. Things are not perfect nor should they ever be, but our limitations can also be our strengths. It is important for us to focus on our strengths. I wish for harmony within my family and community.

Victor Allan Horseman**Place of birth:** Beaverlodge, Alberta**Ethnic origin: / Ancestral history:** Cree**Earliest/fondest childhood memories:**

I recall sitting around camp fires with the entire extended family my Mom and Dad, brother and sisters, kokums and moosums, uncles and aunts, and of course cousins...Those were the wonderful days when we all went on hunting trips and everyone worked together and shared. The tents were pitched and firewood was stocked up; in a day or so the meat rack would be full of meat. We were always on the go and this gave me a great sense of who I was. When I close my eyes, I can almost smell the smoke from the meat racks and hear the crackling fire, it used to make me feel so warm. When night struck, we could hear the coyotes howling away in the distance, as we drifted into a secure sleep knowing morning will bring new adventures. Oh yes with the adventures came, a big breakfast- bannock or hotcakes, bacon & moose meat cooked together, yummy my favorite! I still long for the taste of the food as it was so wholesome and oh God it was good! I can also remember my kokum working the raw moose hides, transforming from one stage to another, finally into soft golden blankets, which had a smell that would last for days. This is still fresh in my memories today.

**Do you currently or did your family of origin actively practice tradition? How?**

On the maternal side of my family, my grandparents were traditional healers. Their “traditional” way of life along with their dreams of yesterday’s world is what prepared me to live in today’s world. Despite our traditions being compromised, the challenge is from the Canadian Government who introduced legislation and made it a criminal offence to participate in our traditional ceremonies... Even with all the challenges of colonialism and assimilation and the hardships we experienced yesterday, today & tomorrow we will continue to thrive. Today many of our people are participating in traditional ceremonies, learning their languages and educating themselves. We are unique as a people have endured hardship have been nearly wiped out. We have had our human and treaty rights that have been denied to us as a people even through the era of the sixties scoop and residential schools.

Today, as Aboriginal people, of a nation we represent 1.5 million of 35 million people of this country. We are growing 5-6 times of the national population. At one point our Nations were 45 million strong on Turtle Island. Our ancestors have sacrificed their lives for us to be here. They left legacies of purpose with the intent of attaining personal and community wellness. We are determined people who have survived and will continue to thrive even with the oppressed dark history of Canada involving Aboriginal people.

What teaching of resiliency that has evolved from your journey would you like to impart for this project?

Cultural racism was an issue for me when I was asked, “Where my feathers were”. During my Katimavik experience, it really opened my eyes to learn more about who I was as an Aboriginal person. Since then, many insights of identity helped me pass on lessons I have gained in my life. The most fulfilling aspect of my employment was in the career development sector. This gave me the opportunity to help be a catalyst in assisting individuals and families across Canada attain meaningful training and livelihoods. Yes I have feathers, eagle feathers. I feel honored to have such powerful gifts given to me! Where are your feathers?

Never let anyone limit your success. As Aboriginal people, we should support and celebrate each other’s successes and provide mentorship to act as role models for our own. When one succeeds, we all succeed as a people. Explore and experience all you can in life for this is a vast world full of opportunity and adventure. You are the explorer of your life, you are the dreamer and you have the ability to live your dreams.

Educational/training & professional background: & volunteering (helping out)

For me education is life long leaning as each day has a lesson. I realized this when I was a teenager and I have always enjoyed learning. Going to college and taking university courses have been valuable to my career. Education is very important to everyone in today’s world and without education your employment and career prospects can be very limited!

My professional experience includes both employment & volunteering experience.

My career started in the hospitality industry where I gained many skills such as professionalism, public relations and attention to details just to name a few. While working at Jasper Place Lodge, I saw a presenter speaking about workforce issues. I imagined myself as a public speaker on work place issues. Amazing enough, that vision manifested and I have been able to attend workforce themed conferences across Canada. I shared, participated and facilitated Aboriginal workforce experiences. I was professionally employed for fifteen years in the field of Career & Labor Market Development for Aboriginal programs and services. In 2003, I was a recipient of the Premiers Award of Excellence for my involvement with Canada Career Week.

Volunteering has also been a big part of my life. This started with Katimavik in 1984 and continued through out my life. Volunteering has given me skills to help others who are in need and to work across diverse demographics. In the mid 1990’s, I volunteered with the Canadian Red Cross in Grande Prairie. Today, I am employed with the Canadian Red Cross Central & Northern Alberta Western Zone Office, as an Aboriginal Outreach – Injury Prevention Coordinator. I have also gained a lot of experience and awareness with my involvement with the Aboriginal Human Rights Commission and the Edmonton Police Service where I continue to volunteer. I was honored to receive a Civil Rights Award from the Edmonton Police Service.

What were some of the greatest lessons of your life?

Experiences that took me away from my community taught me the most valuable lessons. I joined a Canadian youth exchange program called Katimavik. This really helped me understand group dynamics, team work and community development at a grassroot level. I learned about various cultures. This exchange helped shape my identity as an Aboriginal Canadian.

Were there role model's or agencies that impacted your life? If yes how?

As a young man, Constable Ted Green really influenced my life. He was a great role model who treated me with respect. He made me believe in myself. His professional conduct was so admirable that it resonates with me and is something that I always want to emulate in my personal life. His behavior became a reflection of my own life. Chief Tecumseh's Shawnee inspirational story of resiliency for Native people was extremely touching for me. He studied the White man at the turn of the century and resisted colonialism. He also studied the differences between the Creator and Jesus Christ. I also have admired the work of Martin Luther King. King's "I have A Dream" speech about the values and virtues of people on human rights and civil liberties still gives me goose bumps. His thoughts have impacted my life and have helped me become a role model. The spirit of these guiding individuals passion really has impacted my life and in turn when I assisted people, their success was my satisfaction. Harold Cardinal a man before his time his book Unjust Society released in 1969 and re-released in 1999 was written to capture the issues as we he saw them this is a must read by ALL! I also admire Chief Elijah Harper and all of his accomplishments!

If you have any words of advice for the younger generation what would that be?

If you're not happy with your current situation only you have the power to change it. You have the ability in yourself to succeed and become what you desire by making your dreams your reality. Thinking positive and being articulate with your words along with your optimistic intent will make you shine. Your attitude can truly impact people around you, take a look around and ask what influence do I have on these people? What is my potential impact on this person? Is this what I want people to see in me? Is this all I can be? Ask yourself these questions often! Dream about a better life and once that is achieved, dream bigger dreams, always have a dream and once that is achieved dream bigger and keep achieving and attaining new heights in life....

What are you wishes for your family and community?

My wish is to help rekindle traditional lifestyles. A family with tradition is a family. A family without tradition is a lost family. The traditional teachings of the medicine wheel, the four directions and twelve laws help with identity for all people who have respect for individuality.

My wish for my family

This is dedicated to my late mother Mrs. Jane Rose Horseman- Oh how I miss her so much, it seems just like yesterday she was here. My mom was an incredible woman everything she sacrificed and did for us was for our benefits. She was a hard worker, an awesome cook and a good counselor. She provided me with so much support in life! She easily transitioned into so many roles and regardless she made due with what we had. Birthdays were her specialty; she always made into an unforgettable event for all of us! My mom was a pillar and a joy. I wish that her memory and spirit will live in all of us; I pray especially for my sisters and their children that they will find the same drive my mom had and compassion. If they mirrored our Mother, their challenges and hardships wouldn't be so hard. I think all of our moms and grandmothers struggled but they lived very full lives and raised us with perfect intent and unconditional love!

TRUE MEANING OF SUCCESS IS FINDING YOURSELF AND BEING.

Violet White

Date & place of birth: Jasper, Alberta, Dec 11, 1955

Ethnic origin: / Ancestral history: Cree Iroquois, English, French, Grandfather spoke michif

Current family (i.e. married, common law, single): single, 5 children all grown up, nine grandchildren

Earliest/fondest childhood memories: lived in Hinton, time spent with mom and dad. We had a good life. We lived by creek garden acre size and often there would be baby ducks on the water. We learnt about nature and herbal medicine. We were healthy as we ate wild meats, moose, deer, beaver and ducks.

Do you currently or did your family of origin actively practice tradition? How?

No, Mom knew a lot about medicines. Did not practice ceremonies. Parents had different ideas of beliefs systems. Grandma influenced me by telling me make our own choices. At age 22, I chose to become a Christian so that has been my spiritual base for 30 years.

What teaching of resiliency that has evolved from your journey would you like to impart for this project?

At one point I was thinking of quitting my education as I was in dysfunctional family environment. I wanted to excel in my life. My friends impacted me and saw my potential and encouraged me to finish my goals.

Educational/training & professional background:

In 1982, I went back to school 1986 and attained Bachelor of Arts degree. She was taking art courses towards nursing degree and the program did not go through. . I have been a Community Health R representative for the past 27 years.

What were some of the greatest lessons of your life?

One of the values that really was instilled in me was respect for Elders and all people. And to accept people for whom they are. Dad always believed in hard work and to always do your best. Care for what you do and be passionate about it because it really can impact people. Everybody is equal.

Were there role model's or agencies that impacted your life? If yes how?

Respect people in positions of authority, people in leadership employer. Everyone is equal no one greater than others.

If you have any words of advise for the younger generation what would that be?

Don't quit, pursue your dreams, never think of yourself to highly, let others compliment you. Be humble.

What are you wishes for your family and community?

That they get healthier mentally, spiritually, physically and emotionally. Once they have balance things will be better.

