



OUR SHARED FUTURE: THE STORY OF CHELSA AISTINE

ORANO CANADA NORTHERN SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT: 2014-2016

Northern Saskatchewan is a place full of opportunity – and when the right people are given the chance to achieve their dreams, there's no telling how they will impact education, literacy, and tradition in the pursuit of creating the best possible future for our community. Chelsa Aistine is one of those people.

This September, Chelsa's four-year-old son Caleb started Kindergarten at the school on the Flying Dust First Nation where she works as a teacher.

That's a familiar situation for Chelsa, whose mom was principal at Father Megret Elementary School on the Hatchet Lake First Nation and that she attended as a girl.

"I was good so it wasn't an issue," she laughs.

Chelsa's passion for teaching was kindled while growing up on Wollaston Lake. Her mother was an accomplished educator and her father worked for the band. She especially enjoyed the traditional aspects of life at Wollaston that built pride in her Dene culture and strengthened the family and community.

"We are a hunter-gatherer type of people. Our Dad went hunting and whenever he got back I would have to stay and cut up the meat until it was done. It didn't matter what time of day or night it was."

Chelsa completed elementary school at Wollaston. She moved to Prince Albert with her family to attend high school. By Grade 11, she was certain that she wanted to be an educator.

After graduating, she enrolled in the Indian Teacher Education Program at the University of Saskatchewan. She applied for a northern scholarship from Orano to help with books and living expenses and was successful. Four years later, she graduated with a bachelor's degree in education and immediately took a teaching position at Kopahawakenum Elementary School on the Flying Dust First Nation near Meadow Lake.

Now 25, Chelsa is well established in her profession with three years of experience. As a teacher, she works to engage kids in sports as well as participates in the same traditional activities that she enjoyed so much as a child.

"We did a lot of culture camps at my school and I learned a lot of things that I now use in teaching my students. I teach them about

berries, and things like how to set up a tent and cook and how to cut up meat," she said.

Chelsa is inspired by the potential of traditional teachings in education and she is thinking about pursuing a master's degree and working toward development of land-based curriculum and programming development to help other educators.

For now, she is happy to teach at Flying Dust and see her own son grow and learn at school.

Orano Canada is proud to have helped Chelsa achieve her dream of becoming an educator, enabling her to bring her passion for community, people and tradition full circle.