

2011 School District 27 First Nations Role Model Essay by Michelle Myers

My name is Michelle Myers and I'm 17 years old completing grade 11 at Columneetza Secondary School. I have a son who turned one on May 12th of this year; his name is Treven Patrick James Lulua-Alphonse. My parents are Lorna Myers and Patrick Lulua. I have four siblings; Lori, Helen, Kayla, and Aaron. I own a 9 year old 13.2hh paint horse that I use to barrel race with. I love to rodeo and take part in gymkhanas. I am from Nemiah Valley B.C. and I am learning to speak my Chilcotin language. My Chilcotin culture is a huge part of my life and I make sure to establish it in everything that I do.

Throughout my life I haven't always made the best decisions and there was a point where I went down the completely wrong path. I hurt some of the most amazing people that I will ever have in my life, my family. I became involved with alcohol at the young age of 13. These are the times during my life in which I wish I could block out and completely forget about as if they had never happened, but like everything else these memories are there to help me grow as a person. I didn't realize what was important for me at the time and soon enough, education became the least important. Looking back at the person who I was back then I'm ashamed to even say it was me. Luckily I have parents who love and nourish me with everything they have, not all kids are as lucky as I was. My family had made the decision to move out to Nemiah for the sake of my health. I soon became to fall in love with the beautiful valley and with time the healing began. My parents had bought me my first horse which helped me overcome my weaknesses and help me understand myself better. The thing that saved me from alcohol was my culture. I became closer to my Chilcotin ancestry living out in Nemiah and spending time with my horse.

I have been alcohol and drug free for more than 2 years now. After I quit drinking the hardest thing to get back was the trust that my parents use to have for me. You never know the privileges you have until they are gone. I worked hard at school and I worked even harder with my horse, in the end all of my hard work paid off and I was able to show that I was worth trusting again. The chance that I had to overcome my sad addiction is what I want to be able to offer to other First Nations youth within our community. I see the violence that goes on between our own people and it hurts to know that they are all the butterfly effects of residential schools. As a Nation I feel like it is time to overcome these insecurities and look forward to a better tomorrow.

I became pregnant with Treven when I was 15 and had him when I was 16 on May 12th 2010. I went through 23 hours of labor to deliver the most amazing little gift into the world. Becoming a mother changed my whole lifestyle and I wouldn't take it back for the world. Being a mother to Treven is both a privilege and a challenge, but I take it on everyday and accomplish more each time. I love motherhood. I am able to raise my son mainly by myself and still maintain my grades at school. Treven has taught me how to respect my body and after giving birth I see myself in a whole new way.

The lifestyle that I am leading now is a healthy one with positive thoughts in mind. My education comes first and I enjoy school. I look to pursue a career as a Marine Biologist and when I finish high school I am pointed in the direction of attending the University of Victoria since it is near the ocean and I will have access to study the marine ecosystem. I have a huge interest in biology and I also love math. English is another one of my favorite subjects and I enjoy reading and writing. If I don't pursue Marine Biology I have several other career choices; I look to work in the business of equestrian animals. Or try my luck in Professional Rodeo.

Throughout the past two years I have accomplished so much in such a short period of time. I've made it to the 2008 North American Indigenous games playing on the Team B.C. midget girls soccer team. My team brought home the silver medal that year. The experience is something that I will cherish forever. In the summer of 2009 Flash and I were given the "Nemiah Valley Gymkhana Jr. All Around Champion" belt buckle. I have established a spot in both the effort and honor rolls at school. This past spring break I was selected as one of the 18 representatives from different regions all through B.C. to go as a Youth Regional Lead for the Cariboo Interior to the Gathering our Voices Youth Conference in Prince Rupert B.C. I was selected to be a part of a "Sport and Active Living Leadership for Aboriginal Youth" group, which promotes healthy and active lifestyles through sports and recreational activities. I am a member of the group for a year and I speak my concerns for my community and promote healthy and active living within the Cariboo.

Ever since the birth of my son, my personality has changed enormously. I have become more mature and I am told that I do act a lot older than I really am. I bring nothing but respect to people and treat everyone equally and fairly. The world is a much nicer place when everyone gets along. I feel that I bring an honest perspective to everything that I involve myself in. I have assessed the issue of the multiple gangs within the small town of Williams Lake and I believe that with time and commitment the issue can be resolved. My goal is to promote a healthier understanding of each other and find easier ways of resolving conflict.

I take a huge interest in the history of our people and the hardships that they have had to face. I take pride in everything that I do and I don't ever let anyone tell me that I'm wrong because of what I believe in. I am here to represent the creator and he is what gives me strength. I look out for the interest of others and make it known that I'm always here to help. Seeing other people succeed and accomplish their dreams is what I want for us as a Nation to work towards. My whole life is about turning dreams into reality. We are only human beings, but the power that we have when we come together is what helps an amazing race stand out. I live my life looking forward, always forward. I rarely catch myself looking at my past. I hope that the foot prints that I leave in the earth today will affect my son in a positive way when I am no longer there to guide him. I hope to leave a good impression on earth and a healthy trail for others to follow when they need guidance.

Michelle Myers
First Nation Role Model Candidate 2011