

CHRIS WILKE MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

My great grandfather's only career was as a trapper which he started at 12 years old and continued to do till he was 90 years old. He maintained 2 trap lines, one of which is still in the family today having been passed down to my grandfather and now currently my uncle. I am Métis, and an active member of my Métis community. My heritage makes me very proud; in the elementary school I attended we did a unit on fur trading, I asked my great grandfather if I could take his prize pelts to show my classmates and he was honored. Showing off the pelts was exciting. Quizzing my classmate as to what each animal was, instructing on how to properly feel the fur, explaining how using traps was more economical than guns and sharing my experiences of going out to my family trap lines made me proud of my heritage. My teacher was so impressed she asked me to share my presentation with many other classes.

List all activities, clubs, or teams in which you participated during high school.

Throughout my high school career I played trumpet and trombone in my schools concert band, tour band and jazz ensemble. I sang and toured in our schools tour choir. I was in the equestrian academy at my high school and volunteered at the stables that we rode at outside of class. My schools multicultural showcase 'Taste of Kane' was a yearly event that I participated in with my friends. The 'Hope Cafe' was a fundraising club for hurricane Katrina victims for which I was a senior supervisor for. I also played for a community league soccer team. I have my advanced drivers licence, my class 6 and my boaters licence. I love fishing, sailing, archery, waterskiing, dirt biking, motorcycling and canning during the summer. In the winter I love snowboarding, baking and ice fishing with my uncle and cousins.

Briefly outline your plans for a future career or profession.

I sought advice of a family friend who is the President of BioAlberta; Amanda Stadel. With a degree in environmental and conservation science and native studies, I will be able to easily market myself to oil field, mining or forestry related companies since demands for environmentally sound day to day operations and land reclamations will always exist. With aboriginal voices continuing to become louder, companies realize the value of aboriginal employees on staff. With this degree and my Métis heritage, I am an ideal asset. I know that I can make a difference and help this generation and future generations.

Furbearer Management

Furbearer management is crucial in the twenty first century. We no longer have the same amount of people trapping for survival; today trapping is primarily used to maintain honoured traditions and heritage and more often as a secondary income rather than a primary income. In order to maintain our proud traditions and cultures we must be more attentive about over hunting. Having spread our domains such as cities, refineries and exploration into the wilderness, we have taken natural lands from our wildlife, confining them to much smaller areas than before. First Nations of Alberta used to migrate along with the buffalo and bison herds, now buffalo and bison are confined to small protected reserves around Alberta. Although we no longer hunt buffalo or bison, one can see how this confinement makes it easy to accidentally offset the natural cycle of predator and prey of any furbearing animal.

To be taught how to trap is to teach a lifestyle of humility and responsibility. Our world has many beautiful natural cycles we must be aware of. The predator and prey cycle is how the world controls populations. An easy example of humans offsetting this cycle is in the early twentieth century when the European beaver was hunted to near extinction for its wonderful fur, the fur was not needed for survival, people wanted to have beaver hats as a fashion statement. Furbearer management can help perfect these natural cycles, by helping maintain balanced populations. With the amount of communication and technology we have, environmentalist can track numbers and migrations easier and trappers and hunters can easily communicate what they see out in the field on a whole new scale.

People are more aware of air and land pollution because it is a harm you can physically see and has a consistent trend. Furbearer management awareness is harder to educate people about since it is a harm that changes every year; its consistency depends on weather, animal numbers and plant growth. If there is a major fluctuation one winter to the next then the spring will be drastically different than the previous spring. This is why it is important for any hunter or trapper to stay on top of information and for new trappers and hunters to become educated. Furbearer management does not get enough recognition from the general public, animal populations are incredibly vital to the environments health and sustainability.

Recently I began working at Cabela's, furbearer management is important to us; we always promote that people are hunting and trapping within season, and following the proper regulations and laws. Having sales and deals set around the start of the different seasons help keep people from poaching and encourage ethical practices. Many people discuss how different environmental factors affect populations and the amount of animals they are allowed each season.

Animals have become expendable due to the fact that we need trees, oil sands, gas and coal from our lands. To have coal is now a need, to trap is now a want. Our necessities have changed. In this day and age it makes it even more crucial to follow furbearer management regulations and make sure we can preserve our lifestyle.