



## STÓ:LŌ TOURISM COMMISSION

Unit 29 – 6014 Vedder Road

Chilliwack, BC V2R 5M4

Tel: 604-858-0009

[scf.paula@shawcable.com](mailto:scf.paula@shawcable.com)

[www.stolotourism.ca](http://www.stolotourism.ca)

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### **Aboriginal Spirit: Honouring Women, Arts & Fashion, Chilliwack**

The Stó:lō Tourism Commission held its 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Aboriginal Spirit event, held on Saturday November 1<sup>st</sup>, 5pm – 9pm, at the Tzeachten Community Centre, 45855 Promontory Rd, Chilliwack.

Over 250 people attended the Honouring ceremony and silent auction. 25 volunteers staged the Aboriginal Fashion show, featuring 8 Aboriginal Clothing and Accessory designers. Nelson Leon, Sacred Connections, was the MC from Chehalis First Nation, and also sang and drummed for special Hoop Dance performance by Gary Abbott, of Siska First Nation.

#### **2008, Fashion Designers:**

Linda Lavallee Designs

Karl Harris Designs

Mali Wear, Spirit Bear - Gwen Therrien

Spirit Elk Designs - Rikki Kooy

Ringing Bell Robes - Linda Kay Peters

Haida Cedar Hats by Todd DeVries

Thunderhill Ranch Cedar Bracelets, Brianna & Danielle Underhill

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### **2008 Award Recipients:**

#### **Culture: Elizabeth Herrling, Ts'ats'elexwot, Seabird Island**

Elizabeth Herrling was born December 12, 1915 at Seabird Island First Nation. She will be celebrating her 93<sup>rd</sup> birthday in December. She is a mother of two and has raised numerous foster children.

Elizabeth is currently one of a small group of people who are fluent speakers of the Up-river Halq'eméylem Language.

In 1994 at the age of 79 she began working with Stó:lō Nation's, Stó:lō Shxweli Halq'eméylem Language Program. Elizabeth worked with Rosaleen George ~Yamólot and linguist, Dr. Strang Burton from 1994-2002 recording Halq'eméylem Language lessons and stories. After Yamólot's passing Elizabeth continued to work with Dr. Burton. Among their many projects together they produced 'A Weaving Story', "Torch lighting" and "Baby Bear", each is and illustrated story book written in the Up-river Halq'emeylem Language. Each story book is accompanied by a CD rom version of the story.

In June of 2004 Elizabeth was nominated for and received an honorary Doctorate of Letter from the University College of the Fraser Valley.

During the Spring of 2008 and at the age of 92 Elizabeth retired.

Elizabeth has made an invaluable contribution to the preservation of the Up-river Halq'eméylem Language. Her knowledge of her language and culture and her willingness to share this knowledge with others has helped to insure the longevity of the Up-river Halq'eméylem Language for future generations.

Dr. Elizabeth Herrling sets a fine example for our youth and I feel her community spirit is worthy of an Aboriginal Spirit award.

#### **Health: Dianne Garner, Adams Lake First Nation**

I would like to respectfully nominate Dianne Garner for consideration to be honoured at the 3Rd Annual Honouring Women, Arts & Fashion event on November 1, 2008.

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I have known Dianne Garner for a few short years and I have constantly been impressed with her gracious spirit, her high energy, her tireless commitment, and her limitless passion in every area she becomes involved in.

Dianne has shown leadership with our Drug Task Force, commitment in her position as a community development worker and unwavering commitment to Mother's Against Drunk Driving as she is the President of the upper Fraser Valley chapter. She developed a Mock car crash in Seabird Island for the Youth to see other friends in accident to kick off drug awareness week.

This year in particular she accepted a great honour to travel with the Spirit Pole throughout the province and then on to the Indigenous Games. This was a great opportunity however, it did not come without sacrifice. She was willing to leave her home and family to accept this responsibility.

Dianne's willingness to educate, promote culture, prevention, awareness, personal health, culture, sports, and business result in her involvement in a very diverse selection of initiatives. A few of those initiatives include: emergency preparation, training, prevention training, substance misuse training and education as the Chairperson for the Drug Action Task Force- Helped create Crystal Meth Forums ie: Shattered/ a play that interacts with the audience about drug addiction,. Dianne is active in health promotion, school forums, and a host of other contributions.

Dianne's time and commitment are exemplified by her willingness to communicate, passion for culture, pursuit of education, recognition of the importance of youth, and her empowering capacity becomes contagious in every arena she finds herself in. She makes a wonderful candidate for this years Aboriginal Spirit in the area of Health.

### **Community: Florence Louie, Mt. Currie**

Born in Lillooet, Mt. Currie First Nation, Florence Louie married into Leq'a:mel. She raised three daughters and is mom, granny, sister, cousin and auntie to many.

Through the dark days of residential school, Florence never forgot her culture. She has learned much and passes along all that she knows. Currently, she is re-learning her Statliem language from Herman Dan, another Mission Elder. She attends all society-building events, meetings and forums and she votes.

Mrs. Louie maintains her culture, by reminder other of what they need to think about for good of the community, and by keeping the songs, stories, and visiting going. For example, she was a visiting Elder at Mission Institute, offering support and information, playing cards, and singing and drumming, from 1972 to 2003. As one of a group of visiting Powwow Elder she still visits.

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A witness at indigenous events she attends, Florence is reliable and careful. Always involved in education, she is a long time supporter of the Siwal Si'wes School District 75, inclusion of indigenous teachings. Florence is slowed down by Elder legs, but attends Siwal Si'wes meetings, all indigenous events and ceremonies including the recognition and honouring of every Mission indigenous students, and all regular school vents she is able to attend. Form their beginnings, she has regularly attended Sto:lo Awards and Siya:ye Yoyes Leadership Training for Fraser Valley students, and been actively involved in them.

Florence has long been a foundation of the Mission Indian Friendship Centre. She has served as cook, cook trainer, board member, Elder and more, and now assists resumption of the Centre's annual powwow.

Ms. Louie is an active member of the Coqualeetza and Mission Elders groups. In both she volunteers for whatever work is required for marriages, funerals, dinners and such. While doing so, she passes on the traditions for others. She visits the sick and goes home for funerals and other events. She works continuously to raise money for every cause that builds the community in general, passing on the wealth and sharing her desire to live the Lillooet and Sto:lo ways. She earns her way for all events she attends, including annual Elders and education conferences.

Florence has sat on many governing bodies. At present, she is one of ten First Nations and Métis Elders on the Region 3 Fraser Region Interim Aboriginal Authority for off-reserve families.

Florence Louie is much respected for her dedication to the communities she lives in. She deserves your recognition.

### **Education: Kathleen (Kasey) Chapman, Seabird Island**

Kasey has worked at Kent Elementary School since 1996. During those years she has transformed the lives of many students and impacted our staff's view of First Nations education. Kasey's role at Kent Elementary School is to support our FN students. Historically this focus has been on academics and Kasey certainly excels in this area. More importantly, however, Kasey has continued to reflect on her role and to question and challenge herself and those around her to support our students in all areas; social, emotional, physical, academic and most importantly, cultural. For many years Kasey was the only First Nation employee in our school. She has set the standards high for those who have followed as First Nation role models within the school community.

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As an individual who has worked with Kasey for all of her years at Kent, I can testify to her dedication to students, to education and to her culture. She has faced challenges and has educated many non first nation educators. It was my great honour to attend a gathering last year at a home of Kasey's daughter and son-in-law. I was overwhelmed with the dance, music and spirituality of the evening. I pride myself on being accepting and knowledgeable of First Nation culture yet this evening was a reminder that I have much left to learn. As well as opening her culture to me, she has also opened the doors of our school to the First Nation community. Kasey has invited elders from surrounding communities in to share their storied and their history.

Two years ago, led by Kasey, Kent Elementary made a decision that has had a significant impact on our view of First Nation students in the public education system. In past, all First Nation funding that came to our school focused on helping those students who were significantly below grade level. Two years ago, through open dialogue led by Kasey, we shifted our focus. While we still support those students who are struggling we recognized that we needed to stop seeing First Nation students as "requiring academic support". We recognized that we had a very strong core of First Nation students who were leaders in our school. Our conversation that year led to a new vision. This vision began with creating First Nation Enhancement Group – to provide opportunities for them to excel. 8 FN students travelled that year to the Aboriginal Firm Festival on Vancouver Island. This experience led to our students to invite our local elders to our school to visually record their students then began to write and illustrate these stories on computer. The following year our school welcomed each of our First Nation communities as we raised our House Post. This was a monumental achievement for our school and was pulled together by our leader, Kasey Chapman. Kasey is not a "talker", she is a "doer". She is an inspiration to students and adults alike. She is the epitome of Aboriginal Spirit!

### **Business: Sandra Bonner-Pederson, Tzeachten First Nation**

Sandra Bonner-Pederson is a member of the Tzeachten First Nation. She has been in the television industry for close to 20 years, first volunteering at Coqualeetza as the host for their local cable show "Rebirth of a Nation" and decided to further her training at BCIT and eventually worked in Alberta at ITV/Super Channel.

Sandra decided to return home and in 2002 established her own video production company, Bear Image Productions. She hasn't stopped since! She has worked on many projects for the Sto:lo people as well as other organizations and individuals throughout the lower mainland. From the day

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she opened, she has created training and employment programs for others, and hired 5 staff at the start.

Sandra is also one of the founding members of the Aboriginal Spirit Awards ceremony as well as an active member of the Sto:lo Tourism committee, where she provides many hours and days even, of unpaid contributions on behalf of the Sto:lo People.

Her sincere passion and enthusiasm for each project is visible in the end production. She takes a lot of pride in producing “Bear Tracks” seen on the local Chilliwack Shaw Cable station. These episodes keep our First Nations community, and the community at large, up to date on what is happening with First Nations today. Sandra is an enthusiastic entrepreneur, and is a shining light for others to follow.

#### **Arts: Rikki Kooy, Spirit Elk Woman, Canoe Creek, Shuswap/ Sto:lo**

Rikki's creative involvement with Master artists to the newest in the Northwest Coast Art scene the last 28 years, set the stage to showcase her aboriginal heritage in fashion design and styling events.

As a business manager and consultant to retail and Aboriginal Tourism organizations, Rikki helps each shine individually. Partnering and working with six other Aboriginal designers she has brought Aboriginal fashion forward in many fashion shows. Most notably of these were at the Aboriginal Spirit '06 and '07 event, with the Stó:lō Tourism Commission and the Gala Awards for Aboriginal Tourism of BC in 2007.

Rikki helped stage the BC 150 'Spirit of the River' Celebration event on September 21st 2008 at the Xá:ytem Longhouse in Mission City BC, which was a huge success with over 800 people joining the celebration.

Rikki had designed the Xá:ytem Rock Wear line and is continuing to develop the Spirit Elk Design and Fashion line for a enthusiastic group of Chiefs and clients. Rikki's passion for art and beauty comes together with this newest opportunity to express her heritage.

Rikki is nominated for the Art category, as she is a tireless advocate for Aboriginal Artists, and has continued to provide her time and support at

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many artist events provincially, including the Harrison Festival of the Arts, the local Chilliwack Christmas Craft Market, the Chilliwack Christmas Craft Crawl, the Sto:lo Artisan Centre Interior Salish and Coast Salish days, where we showcase artists from the regions, and represents the Sto:lo Tourism Commission provincially through Vancouver Coast & Mountains, and First Peoples Heritage networking events. She brings high standards of craft and art wherever she goes, and she always brings others along with her. Rikki has dedicated her life to the development of First Nations artists and honouring all Aboriginal Peoples.

Rikki has a high level of communication, and is a healing woman, who can communicate with many peoples, and is familiar with many First Nation and Aboriginal cultural groups in Canada and the US.

Rikki wears with pride fashions and artworks from many fine artists in various mediums. She is a confident, caring, well respected participant in the world of art, and is familiar with leading and emerging artists, market pricing and collections and artist management.

I attended the 2007 AtBC Awards Ceremonies, for which Rikki developed the room décor and theme; it was a spectacular room, with beautiful tables and centre pieces, which she developed. This theme was evident throughout the venue.

Rikki is a cultural leader, and is familiar with many ceremonies and protocols, especially for BC First Nations, as a descendant of the Lil'wat Nation from Mt. Currie, the Stó:lō of Cheam, and the Canoe Creek, Shuswap of the Interior.

Rikki is imaginative, creative and energetic, and as a keen team player, will make an excellent nomination for this year's Aboriginal Spirit awards in the category of Art.

**The Aboriginal Spirit Planning Committee would like to thank the following sponsors for their generous support:**

BC150 - We gratefully acknowledge the Government of BC support.  
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Rikki Kooy - Spirit Elk Designs  
Gwen Therrien, Spirit Bear, Mali Wear  
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Sto:lo Artisan Centre  
J & P Photography  
Brian Underhill  
Gary Abbott  
Nelson Leon  
Vedder Station Shell – Thoro Hall Family

We hold up our hands to the many staff & volunteers who assisted us to plan and stage this wonderful community event, especially the traditional drummers and singers who honoured us by sharing many beautiful songs for the honourees and throughout the event. Please join us again next year at Tzeachten Community Hall on Saturday November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Yá!h Yexw Kw'as Hó:y!

For further information contact:

Paula Cranmer-Underhill, Manager, Stó:lō Tourism Commission  
Unit 29 – 6014 Vedder Road Chilliwack, BC V2R 5M4  
[scf.paula@shawcable.com](mailto:scf.paula@shawcable.com) 604-824-5276

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