



OUR SHARED FUTURE: THE STORY OF LAURETTE CHANALQUAY

Orano Canada Scholarship Recipient, 1994-1997

Orano Canada is committed to creating better communities that are well-equipped to face the challenges that arise, now and in the future. This is why we established a scholarship program in 1979 – to help northerners achieve their higher education goals and build a better tomorrow for our communities. Since then, we have given \$1.8 million to more than 300 recipients. Laurette Chanalquay was one of them.

A constant learner, even as a child, Laurette was resourceful in finding educational materials. As a girl growing up in Dillon, on the shores of Peter Pond Lake, she would take garbage bags of books and school supplies home at the end of the year.

“All my friends would give me their stuff,” she recalls. “That was my summer fun ... having my own little school and my friends coming over to keep learning through the summer.”

As Laurette grew, so did her passion for learning – a trait that still has not faded from her personality. By the time she graduated from high school, she had children of her own, but after spending some time as a mom at home she felt that there was more she could do for the next generation of northern students. She entered the Northern Teachers' Education Program at La Ronge in 1993, and the following year she applied for an Orano scholarship. To her delight, she was chosen as a recipient.

However, getting the degree proved to be a tough challenge. The classes were in La Ronge – more than 300 km away – five days a week, and she had to drive nearly five hours back and forth every weekend to be with her family. She persisted with her trademark determination, and in 1997, after many long drives and long nights, she graduated and immediately entered the teaching profession.

“My first career job as a teacher was at Buffalo River School here in Dillon, and I've been here ever since,” she laughs.

A member of the Buffalo River Dene Nation, Laurette has had a positive impact on the children and the community in her 22 years working at the school. In that time, she has served as vice-principal and principal, and now acts as the Cultural Coordinator of Land-based Learning.

“I'm really loving my job right now,” she says. “I love the outdoors and I love doing traditional things in the bush with the kids.”

As a cultural coordinator, Laurette takes groups of kids into the wilderness, where they do traditional activities like net fishing, trapping, and listening to stories from Dene Elders. Laurette says the culture camps give the kids a deeper understanding of their identity as Dene people, which helps in all aspects of their lives.

Embodying the idea of lifelong learning, Laurette obtained a Master's degree in Education from the University of Regina in 2008, and credits her ongoing success as an educator to building a true rapport with the kids. “You play with them, laugh with them and help and guide them along the way.”

Her advice for the many kids she has helped to launch in life is simple, too: “Believe in yourself. You can do it.”

Orano Canada is proud to have helped Laurette achieve her dream of being a teacher, and to be involved in the immense contribution she has made to the students of Dillon during her two decades of service to her community in Saskatchewan's north.

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