

# SOAR

MAGAZINE

ALAN GREYEVES

## Doing what I love

**Fauna Kingdon**  
on making an impact

INTERVIEW

**Nathaniel Arcand**  
his journey to stardom

**Business Development Bank of Canada**  
Aboriginal Banking  
155 Carlton Street, Suite 220  
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 3H8

## WELCOME

This issue of our magazine features young Aboriginal artists from myriad genres of the entertainment industry. I was delighted to meet Nathaniel Arcand at last year's CANDO Conference, held in Montréal, Quebec. It's wonderful to see that his son has joined him in his craft of acting—you know you are doing something right when your son wants to follow in your footsteps.

I met Alan Greyeyes when he was working for us many years ago on E-Spirit, the business plan competition for Aboriginal youth in grades 10 to 12. Since then, Alan has completed his education and is now working in the music industry, meeting some fascinating people along the way.

I have not had the pleasure of meeting the other young people featured in this issue, but the articles speak volumes about them and the successes they have attained thus far in their young lives. Barry Morin's dream of becoming an Aboriginal hip-hop artist and producer is coming to fruition. You can learn more about his life and music in his article.

Fauna Kingdon's belief in the importance of education led her to leave her home in Nunavut in pursuit of a degree. Although it was difficult for her to leave her family and friends behind, she found a new support network at university, which helped her achieve her goal of becoming a chartered accountant. She is proud of this achievement and shares her story with you.

Like Fauna, Shannon Letandre—a storyteller who chose to become a filmmaker—deeply missed her family while attending university. She is currently working on her bachelor of fine arts in film production, which she expects to complete in 2010. I know you will enjoy learning more about Shannon and her dreams in film.

**Wendy MacNair**  
Editor  
wendy.macnair@bdc.ca



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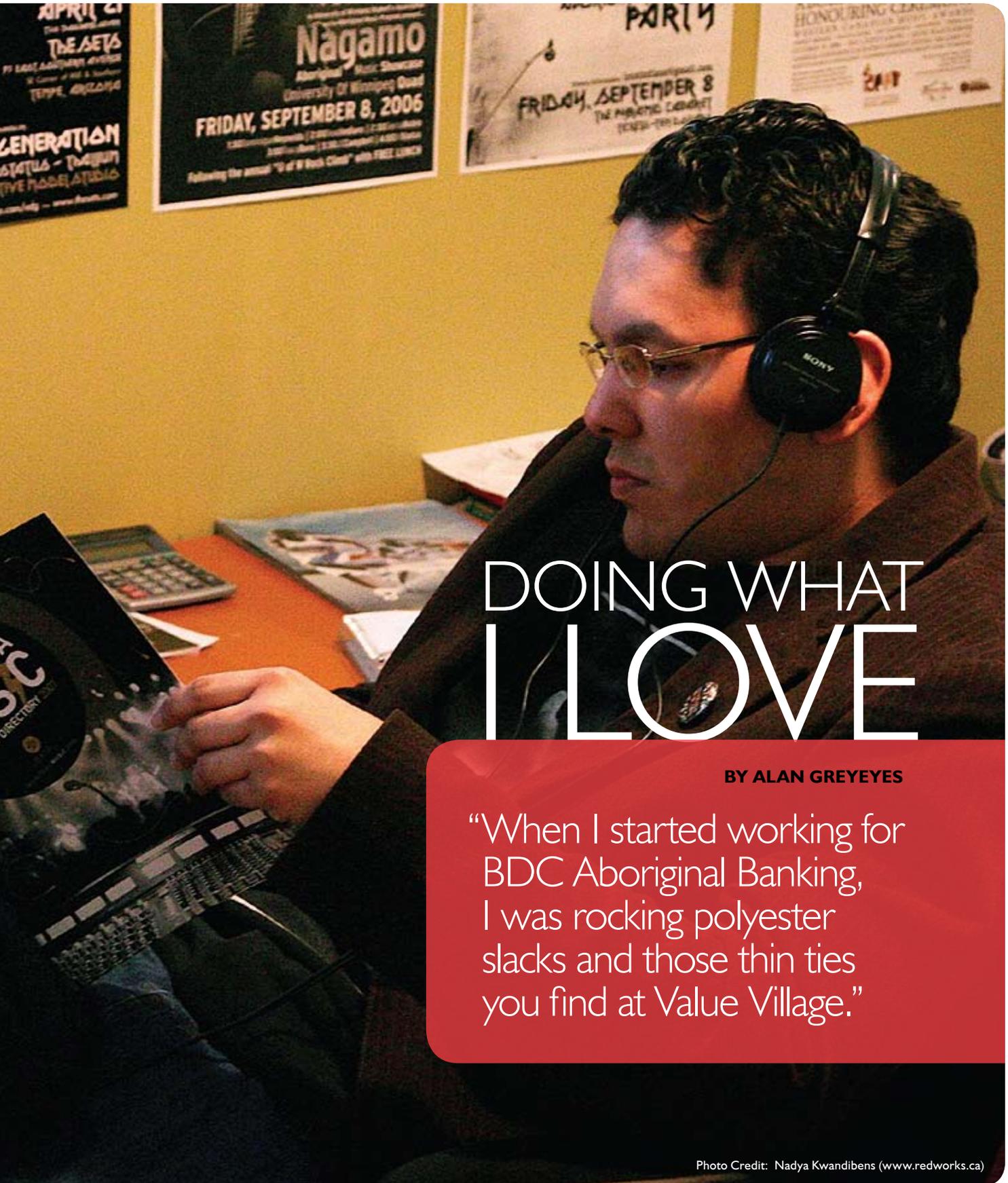
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# DOING WHAT I LOVE

**BY ALAN GREYEVES**

“When I started working for BDC Aboriginal Banking, I was rocking polyester slacks and those thin ties you find at Value Village.”

Photo Credit: Nadya Kwandibens ([www.redworks.ca](http://www.redworks.ca))

The former summer student was involved with the early years of the E-Spirit project, a national Aboriginal youth business plan competition. "I knew I needed to work my way up if I was going to afford the kind of clothes that I wanted to wear."

Nearly 10 years later, Alan is sitting comfortably in his music industry uniform: the latest Air Jordans, dark denim jeans, a button-down shirt and a decent-looking blazer. "Going to university really pays off," he says with a laugh.

A lot has happened for Alan in between wardrobes. He wrapped up a degree in economics at Trent University, operated his own website development and communications business, helped launch the Manito Ahbee Festival and the Aboriginal Peoples Choice Music Awards, and became a dad.

"I feel like those two summers at BDC helped me figure out where I wanted to work, what I needed to do to get there and the kind of skills I needed to develop," he explains. "I've done a lot since then, and I'd say those summers at BDC were quite formative."

Alan's experience with the E-Spirit project gave him his first look at the world of website development, graphic design, business plan writing and, most importantly, project management.

After E-Spirit, Alan bought his first computer, along with graphic design and website publishing software, and started designing and publishing websites for Aboriginal artists and small businesses. "I remember all the long hours I spent on the Big Soul Productions and imagineNATIVE Film Festival websites. I think they were the first projects that I got paid for," he says. "They were

great projects to work on, and I'll always be grateful to those folks for the opportunities they gave me."

Along with websites, Alan completed other projects, such as CD covers, posters and postcards, in the four or five years after his BDC internship. "I'm not sure if I would have ended up doing that kind of stuff if I hadn't been introduced to web development and graphic design and business management during E-Spirit."

Project management plays a big role in the work Alan currently does with Manitoba Music, the Manitoba Aboriginal Music Host Committee and the Manito Ahbee Festival. "At Manitoba Music, I'm running the Aboriginal Music Program, which includes planning full years of programming, applying for funding, running marketing campaigns and managing multiple projects like our Aboriginal Music Performers Camp."

As chairperson of the Manitoba Aboriginal Music Host Committee, Alan handles the bulk of the project development, proposal writing and contracting work for the non-profit. "I'm excited about the next couple of years for the host committee, because we had the Take the Fort tour cover Western Canada as a part of the 2009 Cultural Olympiad," he explains. "And we have proposals in for the launch of Aboriginal Music Week in November and a great tour in development for the 2010 Cultural Olympiad in Vancouver."

The Cultural Olympiad is a series of festivals leading up to the 2010 Olympic Games.

Alan is also a founding member and co-chairperson of the Manito Ahbee Festival Inc., which includes an international competitive pow-wow, a trade show and marketplace, an education conference, Métis celebrations, and the Aboriginal Peoples Choice Music Awards. The festival was in its fourth year and took place on November 4 through 8, 2009, at the MTS Centre in Winnipeg.

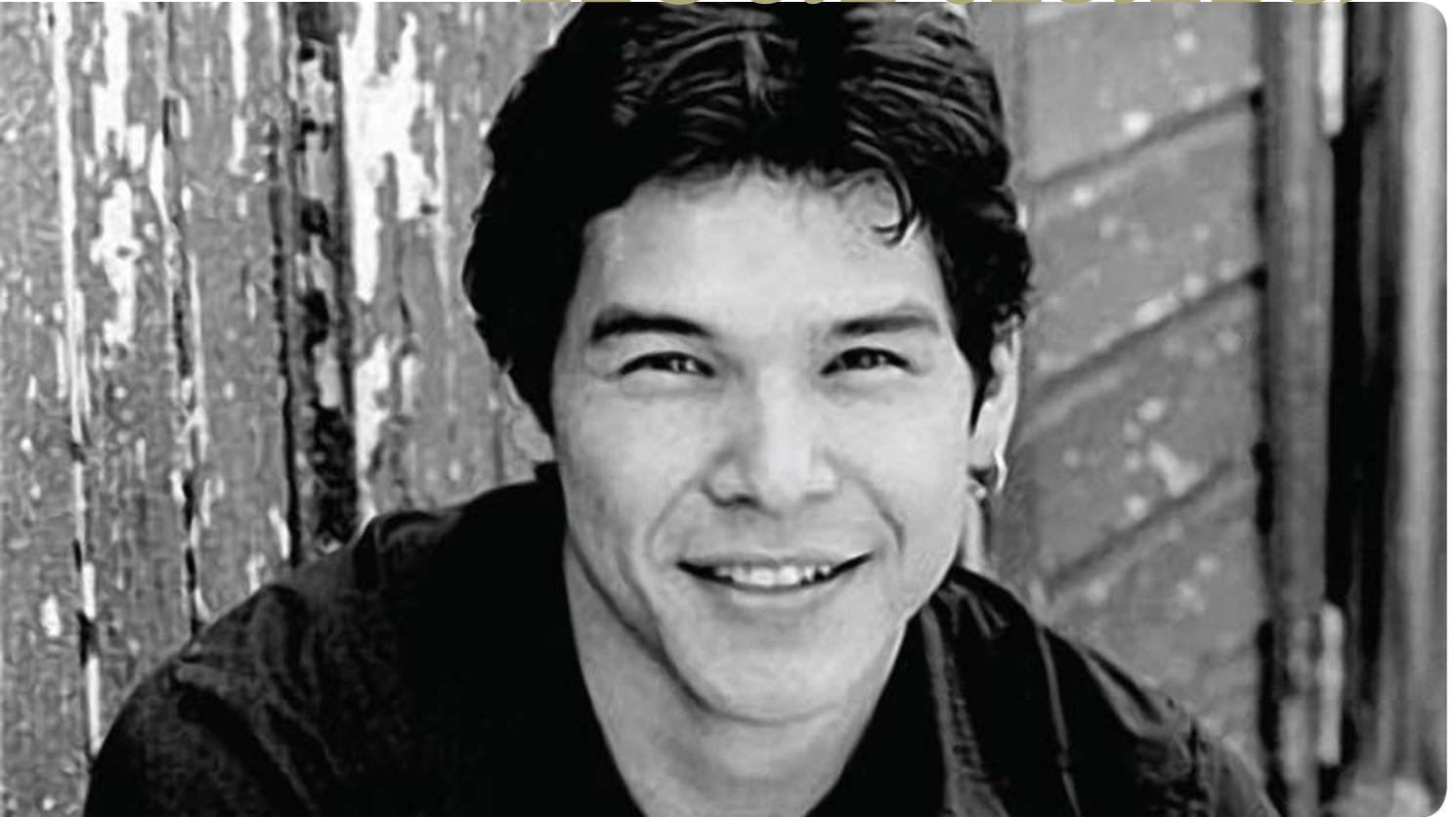
"My summer student experiences at BDC were great and I feel like I've been able to apply a lot of what I learned there to my work in the last 10 years," Alan says. "I hope BDC continues to give Aboriginal students the same opportunities that I had."

To check out some of the projects Alan is involved in, visit [aboriginalmusic.ca](http://aboriginalmusic.ca), [metistour.com](http://metistour.com), [manitohabee.com](http://manitohabee.com) and [aboriginalpeopleschoice.com](http://aboriginalpeopleschoice.com).

**"My summer student experiences at BDC were great and I feel like I've been able to apply a lot of what I learned there to my work in the last 10 years."**

# Heros

FROM THE **heartland**



When he was just five years old, Nathaniel Arcand—the star of such television series as “North of 60” and, most recently, “Heartland”—asked his mother how he could be in the movies. Since then, the Edmonton native has shared the big screen with the likes of Lord Richard Attenborough, Kathy Bates and Pierce Brosnan.

A few years ago, his youngest son Griffin also joined the “family business.” Today, both father and son fulfill their dreams of stardom.

In 1977, Nathaniel Arcand’s mom took the five-year-old in her beat-up car to the drive-in. To young Nathaniel, the movies were pure escapism.

We had a chance to catch up with Nathaniel and talk to him about his fascinating journey to stardom.

**SOAR:** Nathaniel, you were born and raised in Edmonton, Alberta—the eldest of six children, all raised by a single parent, your mom. How difficult was it being the “big brother” to five siblings under these conditions?

**NATHANIEL ARCAND (NA):**

Actually, there was more to it than that. I had to take care of my auntie’s kids as well. I looked out for all of my cousins and anybody younger than me. I changed my fair share of diapers when I was young. Me and my sister and another older cousin had big responsibilities at a young age.

**SOAR:** Have you remained close to them, and do they still look up to you as the “big brother”?

**NA:** Yes. I just think it’s important to be close to your family. I care for my family in every shape and form. And I think it’s important, because a lot of families just don’t seem to have that love and respect. A strong bond between family members is important to me.

**SOAR:** In what ways do you share your cultural heritage with your children?

**NA:** With my youngest, we try to take him to the occasional pow-wow or round dance. We make sure to do that. It’s important for me and important for his development, I think. And even though

I don’t speak Cree fluently, I still try to teach a few words here and there.

**SOAR:** Let’s move on to your acting career. Is it true that you were first attracted to acting when, at the age of five, you watched a Bruce Lee movie?

**NA:** Yes, I was watching Bruce Lee’s Chinese Connection at the drive-in with my mom and my auntie. And we were sitting there and I was just so enthralled by the fighting and the acting. I just remember pointing to the screen and saying to my mom, “Wow, I want to be that, I want to do that.” And it seemed to work out okay.

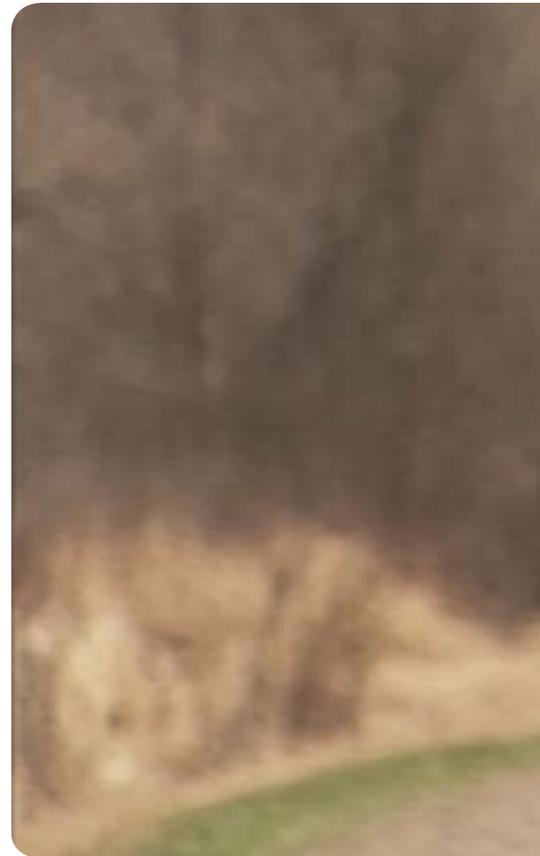
**SOAR:** It’s not surprising that you would later take up martial arts—Taekwondo, I believe?

**NA:** Yes, well, I started mimicking that type of stuff when I was a kid—you know, I was at that age. I made my first pair of “nunchucks” at age six with a broken broomstick and a bike chain. It was pretty crude and not too reliable at all! I remember whacking my elbows and the back of my head a few times.

**SOAR:** When did you start and what rank did you achieve?

**NA:** My first style was karate, actually. I got up to an orange belt, I think. I don’t take any classes anymore, but I’ve learned a lot of styles, and I still try to study new things and participate here and there. I’m not much into the sparring or anything—I just do it mainly for the exercise and staying fit.

**SOAR:** Besides the obvious physical abilities you gained from martial arts practice, some of which can be seen in your work—I’m thinking of the Fox pilot for “The Lone Ranger,” where you had Tonto doing some flying kicks—in what way did the martial arts help you as a person, if at all?



**NA:** Well, I’ve been able to do some of my own stunts, so it’s helped me there. But it’s more than that—it’s kind of a lifestyle for me, actually. It’s all about feeling younger. It also prepares you physically for tougher roles. You don’t want to look like you’re tired when you’re doing a movie. On movie sets they have stunt doubles for you but I like to do most of my own stunts.

**SOAR:** Do any of your children train?

**NA:** Yes, my son Griffin is taking Taekwondo classes. He loves it. He’s been taking them for the past year or so. I’m happy for him. He’s quite active with that.

**SOAR:** Your bio states, and I quote: “Nathaniel has noted that the native people of the U.S. and Canada do not have a native action hero and (he) would love to be their first.” Do you have any projects along those lines?

**NA:** Well, there have been certain people here and there, like Tonto from the original Lone Ranger series. I can’t disregard the achievements of some of



Nathaniel Arcand in *Blackstone*. Courtesy Prairie Dog Film + Television. Photo by Marc J Chalifoux

these people. On a personal level, I feel like I've accomplished it to a certain degree. I've played a lot of action roles. But I still wish there was a native version of Jean-Claude Van Damme, or Arnold Schwarzenegger, or Jet Li. One of those types, you know? We don't have anything like that just yet.

**SOAR:** How important is it to you to be a role model for Aboriginal youth?

**NA:** I never really thought about myself as a role model. And I never really wanted to put myself in that position, because it can weigh a lot on a person. But I've been acting for 18 years now, and I've been in the spotlight of sorts, and I've come to realize how important it is to portray a good way of life. And I'm happy that I've been able to share my life with a lot of the youth out there. I feel like I've contributed to some of the different communities that I've visited. It's rewarding when you get the sense that you've really gotten through to some of these kids. And it makes me feel good that they'd want to follow my example and listen to what I have to say. It means everything

to me to say the right thing and try to live a decent life.

**SOAR:** You attend many youth conferences for native children and teens, where you talk about self-esteem and self-empowerment. Can you tell us a little more about that?

**NA:** When I go to these communities, I just try to show them a different side of life and try to open their eyes to the rest of the world. For me, when I was younger, the biggest challenge was trying to understand other cultures as well as my own, and being respectful to all of them. I try to be respectful to all cultures and to our elders.

**SOAR:** Speaking of youth, and getting back to acting, it seems as if your youngest son is following in your footsteps with his own acting career. How did that come about?

**NA:** Yes, Griffin, my 11-year-old son, has been doing pretty good for himself. Although we had to kind of bribe him to go to his first audition by telling him we'd buy him a Game Boy.

**SOAR:** Did you provide him with any advice, or is he just a "natural," per se?

**NA:** At that age, you can't really give them too much advice. Sometimes you just have to help them understand what kind of emotion they're supposed to be portraying. I try not to interfere too much—I try to let him figure it out on his own. And he's a very smart kid and he has proven himself. He knows how to do it when he needs to. He's following in dad's footsteps, but I told him to stay in school so maybe one day he could have a less hectic job than I do. It can be a pretty hard lifestyle. It's feast or famine, as they say, as it is with any type of art.

**SOAR:** You worked with your son in 2005's "Little House on the Prairie." Do you have any other upcoming projects together?

**NA:** Well, we worked together, but we actually never really had scenes together. But yes, I'd love to work with him someday, and I'm looking forward to the day when we have scenes together. I'm proud of him and of all my children, and anything that brings me closer to them I look forward to.

# TELLING stories

BY SHANNON LETANDRE



Boozhoo/Tansi! I'm a filmmaker who hails from Manitoba. I grew up in my mother's community — Dauphin River First Nation, a small Anishinaabe community about 380 kilometres north of Winnipeg on the west side of Lake Winnipeg. My father is from Cross Lake, a Cree community about 780 kilometres north of Winnipeg.

I've always had storytelling in my heart. I think that can be attributed in large part to my having been raised by my maternal grandparents, Alex and Marina Letandre. They showed me, through their actions and words, an older way of living and thinking that is very much rooted in our culture. Ever since I can remember, my grandfather would tell me stories about his life experiences, as well as stories that were passed down from his elders. I feel so fortunate to have them in my life.

I came to be a part of storytelling in a roundabout sort of way. I did my BA in political science at the University of Winnipeg. And while politics isn't directly linked to storytelling, I managed to fit it into my course work as much as I could. It was during my time in school that I really felt in my heart that I wanted to be involved in sharing stories with others.

After I completed my degree, I worked on a couple of projects that involved interviewing people and putting their life stories, thoughts and ideas into books. After these projects were done, I moved back home to Dauphin River to document stories from my grandparents and record them doing traditional activities, such as smoking fish and collecting medicine.

In 2005, a friend told me about this new National Film Board (NFB) program called First Stories. The NFB was inviting Aboriginal people from Manitoba to take part in a documentary filmmaking workshop it was hosting for one week in Winnipeg. I was one of 15 people chosen to attend the workshop.

After the week was over, we were all invited to pitch an idea for a short documentary to a panel. Four people were picked and I was one. My documentary, *Nganawendaanan Nde'ing—I Keep Them In My Heart*, is about the importance of preserving traditional knowledge and honouring our culture.

The film was completed in spring 2006 and is part of the First Stories Volume I compilation. It made its debut nationally on CBC that summer and has since been shown on the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) and at various festivals across North America. The First Stories Volume I films won a Golden Sheaf Award for Best Aboriginal Film at the Yorkton Film Festival in 2006 and received an Award of Commendation in 2007 from the Society for Visual Anthropology.

The same year the film was completed, I was accepted into the Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema at Concordia University in Montréal. The program was intense—many sleepless nights and definitely a lot of hard work. I completed two more short films there, *Postscript* and *Gagwe Giikendan—I'm Learning*. So far, both films have screened at festivals

and public exhibitions in Canada and the United States.

After finishing my second year in Montréal, I decided to come back home to Manitoba and finish my last few credits at the University of Winnipeg. I expect to receive my bachelor of fine arts in film production from Concordia University by spring 2010.

Moving away from Manitoba really brought me closer to home, in a way. I missed my family so much; it really hurt to be away from them. I also can't even begin to describe the feeling of being separated from this land that I come from. My heart longed for this place. It felt so good to come home for visits—like my heart was being filled up each time I came back. When I finally decided to come home, I felt like my heart was being made whole again. I am so proud to be from this place we call Manitoba—God's Country.

In fall 2008, I was given word that I was one of 15 Aboriginal people from Canada commissioned to direct a short film for the 2010 Olympics. APTN and the NFB are presiding over the Digital Nations project. Each film produced for the project must relay the concept of what nationhood means to the director.

When I first read about the project, my first thoughts were not what it means for me to be Canadian, but what it meant to be Cree or Ojibwe or, for others, Dakota or Dene, and so on. I thought about where I come from, the people that I come from. All that we are as a people relates to the land. We come from this land—it is who we are.

I started thinking of ways that I could show this through film. I thought of showing the land, all the things that we do on this land, showing our movement and so on. Since both sides of my family have either subsisted at one time or continue to live in the bush, I was naturally drawn to showing this life. I have so much respect for people who can

sustain themselves in the bush. They have this deep-rooted knowledge that has been passed down from the old ones—it's so amazing to me.

I decided to show life on the trapline. My Great-Grandmother McLeod from Cross Lake lived most of her life out in the bush. She hunted and trapped well into her 80s. She has always been such an inspiration to me. It was important for me to shoot the film in Walker Lake, close to her trapline. The area is like a magical place to me—it is so rich and beautiful. I am in awe when I am there and so humbled. I feel so blessed to come from these places of such beauty and strength.

I really believe that film and video can help instill pride in our people and validate our culture.

This newest film will be available for download to computers and mobile phones. It will also be broadcast on APTN and at Olympic Live Sites in Vancouver in 2010.

I am so excited and love where things are headed. I feel honoured and blessed to be involved in all of this. I really believe that film and video can help instill pride in our people and validate our culture. We have so much to offer to the world and the more that it's put out there, the more it helps to build us up.

In this way, film and video are great tools to help us mobilize ourselves. I feel that all forms of art and storytelling bring healing. They're an expression of who we are: our dreams, hopes, all that is in our hearts. I'm truly happy to be a part of this. Miigwech for taking time to read this.



# blu blazes

BY BARRY MORIN JR.

Hello, my name is Barry Morin, Jr. — aka BLU — and I am from the Big River First Nation in Saskatchewan.

First and foremost, I feel it is important to tell the truth of my experiences. I first got into hip-hop music while I was in rehab for solvent and drug abuse. According to my parents, I was close to death. I was always getting high from huffing gasoline, until my parents decided I needed help and sent me to a six-month rehabilitation centre for youth in Slave Lake, Alberta.

In rehab, I met some youth counsellors who had their own music recording studio and helped me to make my first song. I was inspired by the music after finding out that I could also make my own beats, and it played a role in bringing me out of my addictions to drugs and solvents.

Also while in rehab, I lost one of my closest friends back at my home rez. That is the inspiration for one of my songs, titled "Left Behind," from the CD R3ZLIFE.

When I came home, I have to admit it was the music that kept me strong to continue to battle against my drug addiction and, especially, against peer pressure. I realize now that the Creator gave me a second chance, and I am making the most of it through creating music beats and writing lyrics that have an impact on others in life.

I was nominated for two awards (Best Debut Artist of the Year and Best Hip-Hop Recording) at two events: the prestigious Native American Music Awards (NAMMYs), hosted in Niagara Falls, New York; and the 2008 Aboriginal Peoples Choice Music Awards hosted in Winnipeg, Manitoba. I was not disappointed not to win at the awards. I was honoured to go to the NAMMYs, especially to perform in front of a large crowd and on live TV at the Seneca Casino, and to represent the new native hip-hop movement in Canada. I told my pops that, win or lose at the Aboriginal Peoples Choice Music Awards, "I just want my music heard."

I have a dream of becoming a successful Aboriginal hip-hop artist/producer. I have already started on this dream; whenever I can find time, I write songs, and I love to sing and perform in front of people. My music is about my personal experiences growing up on the reservation.

My hope is that my music helps others in difficult situations, especially youth. I enjoy helping my friends, as I believe my music will impact the younger generation, because it worked for me. I truly believe that "music is therapy." I have reached some people through singing about family, friends, addiction recovery and much more. I like to encourage youth to not give up on their goals and to go after their dreams.

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It is very important meeting people, as it gives me an opportunity to hear their stories and learn from them about their experiences. Through writing this article, I felt that I could share what my dream has done for other youth and what it has done for me.

I chose the path to create music because it saved my life. With the guidance of the Creator, it would be an honour to also reach out and help someone. I have attended many youth conferences and have gained a lot of knowledge about how youth deal with their struggles and overcome challenges. More than ever, I like to be inspired by them and vice versa.

In closing, I would like to thank SOAR for inviting me to share an article with all of you readers out there. I would like to also take this opportunity to thank my fans for encouraging me to go on with my music.

Much love and respect to all, keep yo' head up, peace.

BLU E-mail: [relevantmovement@hotmail.com](mailto:relevantmovement@hotmail.com)



MAKING AN  
**impact**

BY FAUNA KINGDON

The importance of education and giving back to the Aboriginal community cannot be overstated. Our cultural teachings value sharing and community-oriented actions. It is my hope that the next generation of Aboriginal youth will use education as a tool to build a stronger, healthier and more harmonious society.

To pursue post-secondary education, I had to leave my hometown in Nunavut. I had decided to attend the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg at the young age of 17. It seemed that many people expected me to fail because I was both Aboriginal and from a remote area of Canada.

This expectation of failure led me to become spiteful and ignited a strong desire to disprove any skeptics. This drive urged me on for awhile, until I realized that I was striving for the wrong reasons. What if I had a higher purpose for my goals and ambitions, as opposed to simply disproving others' beliefs?

This question completely changed my perspective. I developed a renewed source of motivation and became empowered by the idea that I could make a difference in the Aboriginal community. With a newfound reason for my education, I successfully obtained my honours bachelor of commerce from the University of Manitoba and a master of professional accounting from the University of Saskatchewan. In September 2008, I passed the national uniform examination for my chartered accountant designation.

It goes without saying that I encountered difficulties and hardships in obtaining my education. Any problems seemed heightened because I was living away from my family, friends and community. Lacking my usual support network in Nunavut, I needed to develop a new one in Manitoba. It was in Aboriginal groups and organizations that I found the sense of community and acceptance I was missing.

Within this network, there were other students who could relate to my struggles and elders to provide guidance. In addition, the cultural teachings and gatherings allowed me to foster and solidify my purpose as an Aboriginal professional. The support I received created a strong desire to give back to my culture, as it had provided me with the strength to achieve my education. One such support network was the Aboriginal Business Education Program at the I.H. Asper School of Business.

During difficult times, it can sometimes seem impossible to accomplish goals and dreams. However, I think it is important that Aboriginal youth remember we come from a strong culture with ancestors who would want us to persevere in the presence of obstacles. Despite many hardships, our people survived and it should be our mission to embrace the opportunities not granted to them.

As one of the few Aboriginal chartered accountants in Canada, I have a vision that I will someday develop the skills necessary to make change for my people. I want to foster economic growth, financial independence and entrepreneurship within our communities. It is my hope that these efforts will lead to higher standards of living and improved social conditions for Aboriginal people in remote communities.

I have a vision that I will someday develop the skills necessary to make change for my people. I want to foster economic growth, financial independence and entrepreneurship within our communities.

Speaking to youth around the country, I always emphasize the importance of education. However, there are many kinds of education to reference, as it comes in many shapes and sizes. There are cultural, trades, university, college, arts and many more areas of learning. Regardless of the struggles one may encounter in pursuing education, I can assure you that the rewards of achieving higher learning are well worth it.

As the next generation of Aboriginal youth emerges, it is my hope that they will embrace education as the key to success. Just think of the progress and change that could occur if all Aboriginal youth became educated and used their acquired skills to make a positive impact in their communities. I challenge all youth to ask themselves, "How can I make a difference, and how can education get me there?"

