

Honouring Truth and Reconciliation

A Voyage into Restorative Practice Workshop Review





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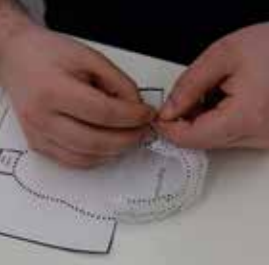
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I have a great strength within me I have the courage to face my fears & to continue on I know my self worth I will not let my past control how I live in the future. Zephaniah





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We acknowledge that we gather on the traditional lands of the First Nations, the owners of Treaties Six and Eight, which are also homelands to the Métis people. We are grateful to them for sharing the land with us.



INTRODUCTION

Portage College applied for, and was granted, the Indigenous Post-secondary Student Mental Health Grant to create a two-day workshop. The funds provided by the Government of Alberta were used to enhance and expand opportunities for students to build resiliency, strengthen mental health, and ultimately find success in their pursuits to learning. This workshop helped to ensure more Indigenous post-secondary students have culturally appropriate mental health care and mental health literacy opportunities available that acknowledge the historical, colonial, assimilative, and socio-economic factors that impact them.

The workshop called *A Voyage into Restorative Practice* uses content and materials from the *Blanket Exercise* developed by KAIROS, training from the International Institute of Restorative Practice, and traditional knowledge from Indigenous educators. The content has been tailored to deliver an interactive experience to participants. The workshop will also be imbedded in College programs, where appropriate, and will eventually reach out to service partners in the communities to create a long-lasting impact.

This booklet was designed to be shared with school children, museums, and others on the journey the workshop will take participants. Along with the resources from Portage College, the workshop can help more individuals learn about the lasting impacts of intergenerational trauma, lateral violence, connectedness, mental health and more to begin the conversations towards healthy relations.

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JOURNEY THROUGH THE WORKSHOP

When we are well and have healthy vibrant relationships, we can begin our voyage of truth and reconciliation long overdue for all Canadians. Welcome to the voyage.

Purpose of the workshop training:

This learning event brings together Indigenous and non-Indigenous college students, staff, and faculty, in a supportive, collaborative learning environment to promote inter-cultural understanding, empathy and mutual respect.

Learning goals:

- Increase student and public literacy regarding the history of colonization of Indigenous Peoples in Canada, the impacts, and journey towards improved levels of mental health and wellness.
- Explore how restorative practice can advance the process of truth and reconciliation, and honour the affirmations and spirit of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (2007) and Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Calls to Action (2015).

Questions to frame the two-day training:

- What is the meaning of Restorative Practice and Reconciliation?
- How can honouring traditional ways of knowing benefit Indigenous People and offer a common future for humanity?
- What is the impact of colonization and intergenerational trauma on mental health?
- How can being restorative strengthen relationships within my circles of influence?
- How does the experience of making a moccasin help me on my truth and reconciliation wellness journey to foster a climate of respect and diversity acceptance within our community?



KAIROS BLANKET EXERCISE

"The blanket exercise was a great way to learn the history of what happened to the indigenous population. It put it all into a visual piece which helped me learn a lot."

- Comment from participant's evaluation form

The KAIROS *Blanket Exercise* is an interactive learning experience that teaches the Indigenous rights history we're rarely taught.

Developed in response to the 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, which recommended education on Canadian-Indigenous history as one of the key steps to reconciliation, the Blanket Exercise covers over 500 years of history in a participatory workshop format.

Blanket Exercise participants take on the roles of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Standing on blankets that represent the land, participants walk through pre-contact, treaty-making, colonization, and resistance. They are directed by facilitators reading narrated scripts about European colonizers. Participants are drawn into the experience by reading scrolls and responding to action cards.

By engaging on an emotional and intellectual level, the *Blanket Exercise* effectively educates and increases empathy. The exercise is followed by a debriefing session in which participants discuss the experience as a group.





RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

"The history and dark truths are difficult to hear, but it is so important that it is exposed so we can understand and move forward. The smaller groups allowed deeper conversation.

- Comment from participant's evaluation form

Restorative Practice is a social science focused on fostering and maintaining climates of respect, where people feel supported, challenged, and valued as contributing members of their community. Restorative practices evolved from restorative justice, applying fair, equitable principles into a broader context aimed at strengthening relationships, addressing conflict and tensions, and reparation of harm to people and relationships as a way of building and sustaining Community.





INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEW AND CIRCLES

“The circles and working/talking in small groups with my colleagues was my favorite part of the workshop.”

- Comment from participant’s evaluation form

- The circle represents Indigenous worldview. It is used in the both the symbolic realm (to convey teachings and promote the development of individual and community values) and on a practical level to use as a structure for discussion and problem solving.
- Circles are a natural order of creation—from the water cycle to the seasons, to the cycle of birth and death—and as such, the circle signifies transformation and movement. For example, medicine wheel teachings illustrate the human journey through life and explains relationships between various aspect of creation, both seen and unseen.
- The circle is infinite and continuous. It is a way of understanding and ‘feeling’ interrelatedness and interconnectedness. “Each component of creation, though recognizable as a sperate unit, only has meaning when in relationship to the whole.” (Anishinaabe Elder Dumont, quoted by Rupert Ross, Indigenous Healing).
- On a practical level, talking circles are a foundational approach to Indigenous pedagogy-in-action since they provide a model for an educational activity that encourages true dialogue, respect, co-creation, and social discourse.
- The nuance of subtle energy created from using this respectful approach to talking with others provides a sense of communion and interconnectedness that is not often present in common methods of communicating in a class or meeting room. When everyone has their turn to speak, when all voices are heard in a respectful and attentive way, the learning atmosphere becomes a rich source of information, identity, and interaction.



HEALING THROUGH ART – CREATION OF THE MOCCASIN



Participants were taught the cultural significance of the moccasin and how it is symbolic of Indigenous world view of all things being cyclical and holistic.

In a traditional story-telling and Indigenous style of instruction, moccasins were created by all individuals using a paper cut out kit. Participants learned of how the traditional moccasin was created from an animal hide and of the tanning process which uses the brain of the animal to “restore life” into a breathing material.

There are many varied beliefs about the cultural aspects of the moccasin. There are special moccasins created for babies to allow the child to freely travel back during sleep to the spirit world from where they came to ease their transition to the Human world. In some Indigenous cultures there are special moccasins used for weddings, funerals and burials. As such, the moccasin is integral and representative in the full circle of life. The connection is to the creator who provides the materials from which the moccasins are created.

The unique designs of various Cree and Dene cultures and the very décor on moccasins is representative of the uniqueness of individuals within the Indigenous peoples.

Each participant created a moccasin and was asked to write a reflective paragraph of what Truth and Reconciliation means to them based on their learnings throughout the workshop.





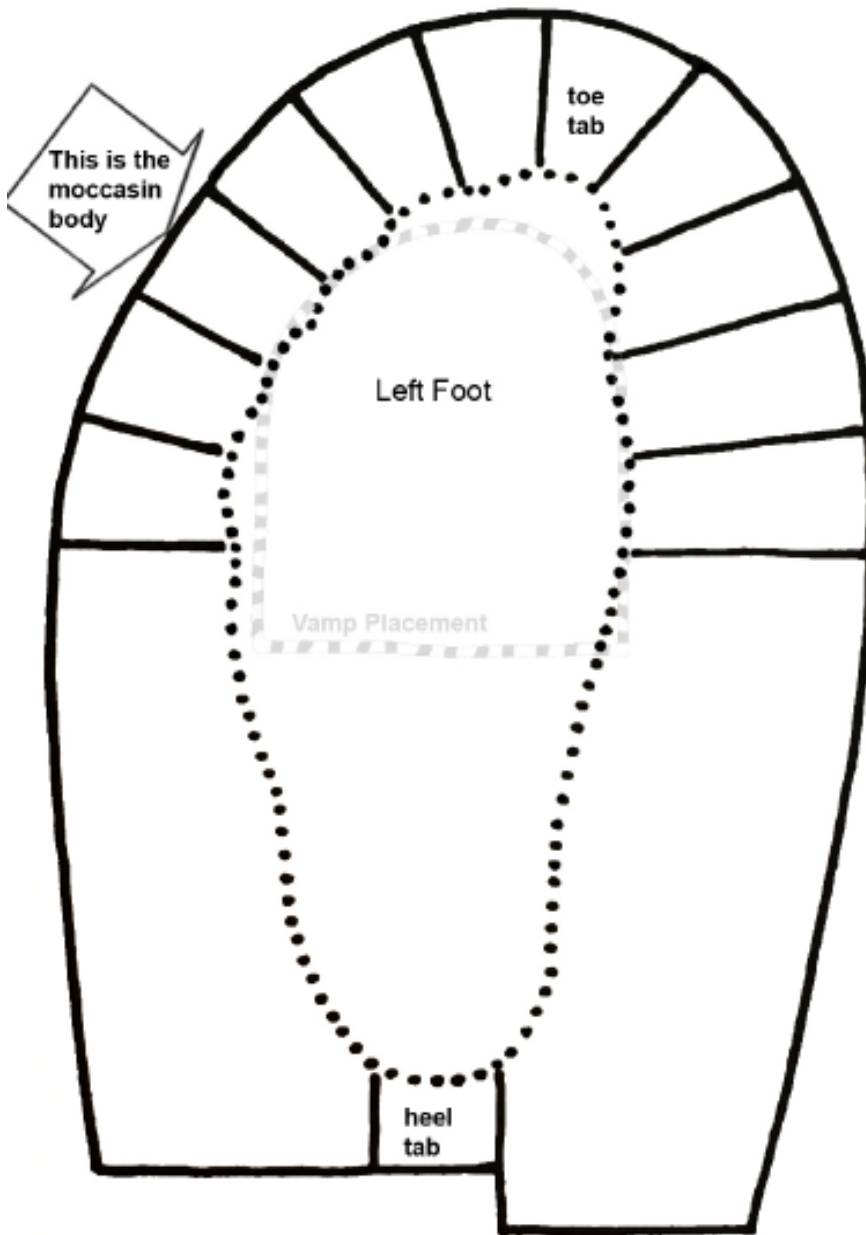
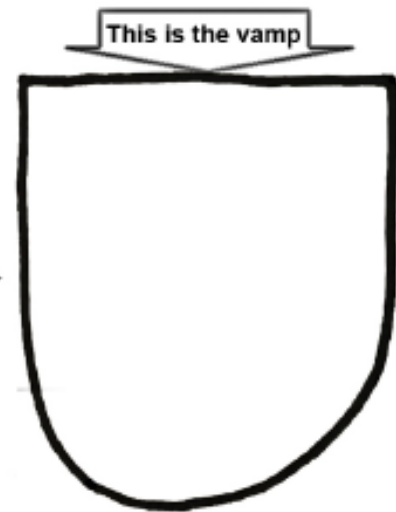
*"I enjoyed the interaction, the personal stories, and the trust that was given to everyone. I was happy to learn about things I had little knowledge about. The reenactments were emotional, but I believe needed to portray the severity."
- Comment from participant's evaluation form*



A VOYAGE INTO RESTORATIVE PRACTICE

Make Your Own Moccasin

Steps: 1. Draw and colour your design on the vamp. →



2. Put inch long pieces of two-sided ($\frac{1}{2}$ wide) tape filling up the dotted sections on the back of the handout.

3. Cut out the vamp and the moccasin body along the solid lines.

4. Cut along all of the radiating solid lines and the two short lines at the heel (do not cut along the dotted lines).

5. Write on the outside sole your reflective piece answering the following: What do I do or be mindful of on my voyage to promote healthy relations and wellness within my circle of influence.

6. Attach the vamp to all of the smaller tabs at the front of the moccasin by rolling each tab up and under the perimeter of the vamp so that the tape does not show. Start at the toe and work your way back along both sides.

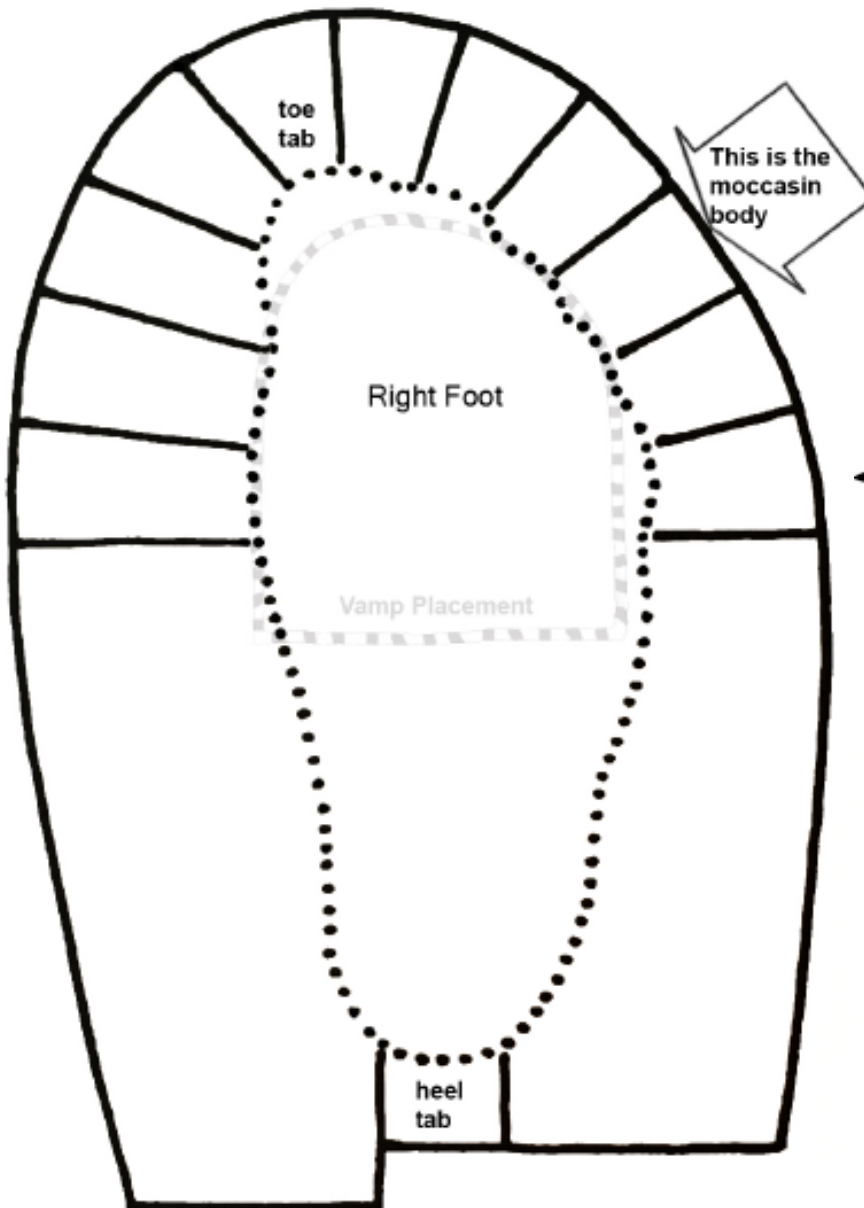
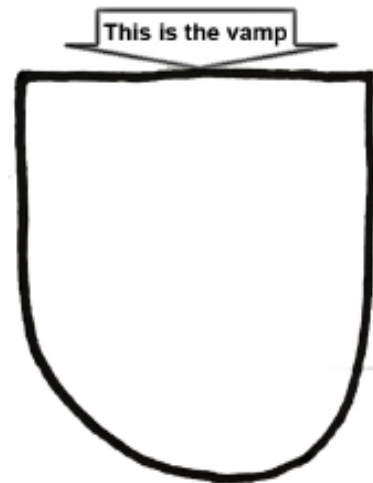
7. Flip up the small back middle heel tab.

8. Join the back heel wall by sticking the taped tab under the other side of the heel wall.

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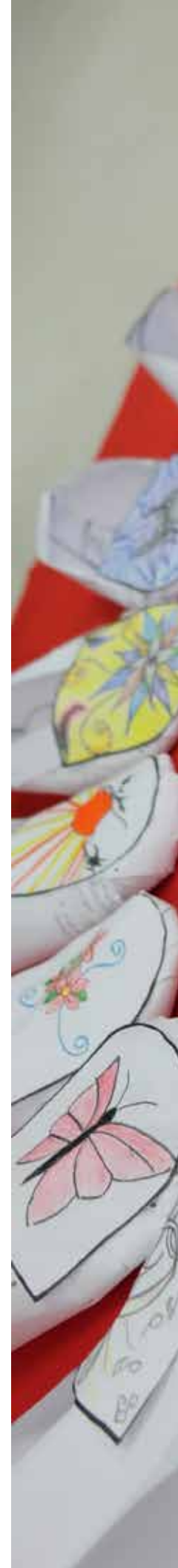
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The blanket exercise – very powerful. Got a lot out of it & how the history was.



I liked starting with the smudging as a grounding point and a good base to start the workshop.





I really enjoyed the blanket exercise, I'm learning new things that I never knew that happen.



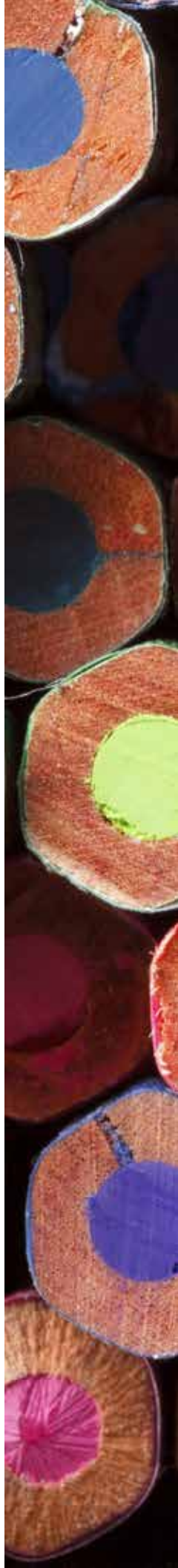
I gained the most out of this workshop in the small circles. Being challenged to open up and be vulnerable. The course ran smoothly and involved lots of active participation which allowed me to feel involved and engaged.





I felt so vulnerable at first but quickly opened up to my classmates and new friends.

My favourite part was the blanket workshop. Didn't realize that much land was taken.





Honestly, I really enjoyed the conversation in the circles. The fact that I could comfortably disclose personal information or challenge others.



Talking about past problems and how they affect the future was my favourite part. The cycle is important to understand.





To hear the stories from all these people I know and see every day - this opened my eyes to see that this is not about the past, it's now.



My favourite part of the workshop was how the facilitators and participants made it a safe place to share, learn & be vulnerable.





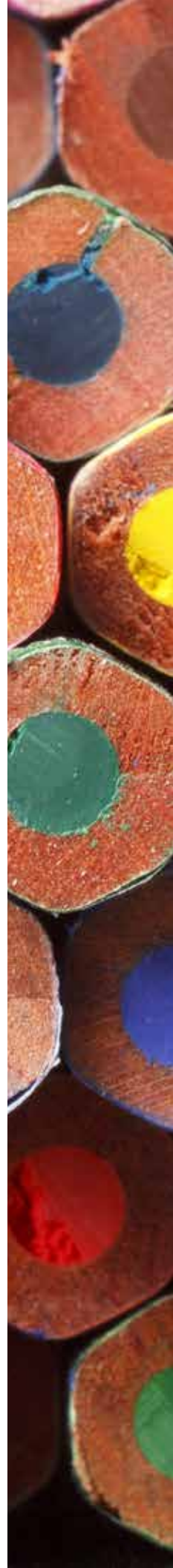
The moccasin making was my favourite part, it was relaxing and the blanket ceremony was an eye opener for me for sure.



*Sharing circles, blanket exercise, videos.
I felt this was a wonderful way to
experience restorative practice – we
bonded in many ways.*



*The entire workshop was excellent. I
enjoyed the encouraging empowerment
of indigenous people. Thank you for this
opportunity and experience.*





Talking candidly with my group really helped. Thank you to the instructor that taught us in this workshop. Great Job!!

My favorite part of the workshop was the blanket exercise. You were able to visualize what happened in the past and true feelings came from exercise.



CONCLUSION

“So many Indigenous people have lost connection with their culture. This has had a negative impact on their feelings of self-worth and pride in their ancestry. Allowing Indigenous people to reconnect and for us to learn together the lessons of our constant connections with mother earth, the creator and each other is essential to our collective mental wellness and healing journey.”

- Facilitator, Ruby Sweetman



Thank you for taking this journey through *A Voyage into Restorative Practice* workshop. If you would like to learn more or look into facilitating this workshop, please contact us:

Portage College
Info@portagecollege.ca
1-866-623-5551
Box 417
9531-94 Ave
Lac La Biche, Alberta, T0A 2T0
portagecollege.ca



FACILITATION TEAM



Chelsey (Supernault) Bourassa is Métis and a Portage College Alumni. Chelsey has worked at Portage College for six years, first as a Student Advisor, and currently holds the position of Community Liaison Officer – Indigenous Relations. Born in Pouce Coupe BC, Chelsey has lived in Dawson Creek, Fort Vermillion and Grande Prairie before moving to Plamondon in 1998. She is the mother of 3 children (2 daughters, 1 son) and has one grandson. In her spare time, Chelsey enjoys reading, being outdoors, spending time with family and friends and learning new activities.



Gayle Desmeules, Master of Arts in Leadership and Training, with distinction, Royal Roads University, 2003. Gayle serves as Western Canada Representative for the International Institute for Restorative Practices and is a proud member of the Métis Nation of Alberta, ADR Institute of Alberta, and Canada. She is dedicated to addressing over-representation of Indigenous people in the social-justice system, improve social determinants of health, and advance the process of reconciliation. She has a diverse background working with government and non-profit agencies in criminal justice, social services, public engagement, mental health, community development and capacity building. Through her company True Dialogue, she delivers specialized training, and provides dispute resolution services mediating family and workplace conflicts, facilitating collaborative problem-solving circles and formal conferences.



Carrie (McDonald) Froehler is the Director of Human Resources at Portage College. Carrie was raised in various communities across Alberta, living in various provincial parks, and now calls Lac La Biche home. Her diverse background includes working nationally with a variety of Indigenous groups as the project coordinator for the National Aboriginal Communications Society (NACS), the Alberta Government and post-secondary education. Carrie has a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of Calgary, a Certificate in Human Resources from the University of Alberta, and a Certificate in Labour Relations from Queen's University.



Sandra (McDonald) Merchant is a member of the Kikino Métis Settlement. She was born and raised on the settlement and currently resides there. Sandra has been employed with Portage College for 18 years as a Student Advisor and Indigenous Community Recruiter. Former Portage Alumni, Sandra continues recruiting to surrounding Indigenous communities. Sandra enjoys spending time with her family and demonstrating to her four grandchildren traditional and cultural teachings.



Robert Rayko holds the position of Cultural and Community Facilitator at Portage College. Robert is a member of the Saddle Lake Cree Nation, but grew up in Lac La Biche and calls it home. Robert has been presenting the Blanket exercise for the past two years as a way to give voice to those who had no voice. On days that he is not working, he is with his grandkids or out at one of his brothers' or sisters' places. Robert enjoys reading, visiting family, knitting socks, riding horses or just being with the horses. His biggest passion is camping and cooking outside. Through these workshops, Robert hopes to accomplish the start of conversations about Truth and Reconciliation and start the small steps to change.



Ruby Sweetman is of mixed Cree ancestry and is passionate about instructor Métis elder Elsie Quintal, from whom she learned this celebrated and time-honored art form. In addition, Ruby has her teaching certification from Portage College in the Field of Native Arts and Culture and teaches in non-academic Indigenous community settings and at Traditional ceremonial events. Sweetman's artwork has been exhibited in museums and galleries in Canada and can be found in various private, corporate, and public collections including the Museum of Aboriginal Arts and Artifacts and the Lois Hole Hospital Art Collection. Sweetman is also a recipient of grants and awards from the Alberta Craft Council and the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.



Shelley Thompson-Jackson is a Nehiyaw Iskwew (Cree woman) from Kikino, Alberta. She is the Coordinator for Portage College Public Legal Education Program. She possesses a Bachelor of Arts degree in Native Studies from the University of Alberta (1994) along with 15 - plus years of management experience in both the non-profit and private sector. In her position with Portage College, Shelley coordinates workshops for the public on legal and justice topics.

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