

Chinook's Edge student nominated for ASBA Honouring Spirit: Indigenous Student Award

Bowden Grandview School has nominated Lisa Arnesen-Davidson, one of its Grade 9 students, for the Honouring Spirit: Indigenous Student Award through the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA). The award recognizes First Nations, Métis and Inuit students in Alberta, "who model strength and commitment in the pursuit of their personal education path and embrace their own gifts, strengths and potential while celebrating the ways of their people."

"When I found out about this award, I knew immediately that we needed to nominate Lisa," said Kelli Northrup, a Bowden Grandview teacher. Northrup wrote in her nomination letter: "Lisa's skills are numerous and impressive, and she amazes us with skills and traits like humility, honesty, charisma and passion."

"When I found out about the nomination, I was excited," said Lisa Arnesen-Davidson. "It's pretty cool. It's like saying I take action, and that I'm trying to help make my school and community better."

Arnesen-Davidson, who has Cree and Métis heritage, notes she is one of only a few Indigenous students attending her school, so it means a lot to her that her teachers are noticing her efforts to share her Indigenous culture with other students.

"When I was younger, I sometimes felt a little bit shy about sharing my culture in front of others," said Arnesen-Davidson.

"Now I'm getting older and I have learned more about my culture. I take pride in being Indigenous, and I know I have knowledge that I can share."

Northrup said, ***"Lisa has strength and positivity about life, and embraces her cultural identity and beliefs. In a small school like ours, I get to see her daily and it's great to observe how she has grown in confidence and awareness of her culture. Lisa is a born leader."***



Top: Lisa Arnesen-Davidson, wearing a ribbon skirt her grandmother made for her. Standing outside of her school - Bowden Grandview School.

Bottom: Arnesen-Davidson with Bowden Grandview teacher, and nominator, Kelli Northrup.



Dawn Weststrate, Vice Principal, Bowden Grandview School said, "Over the last four years, I have seen incredible growth in Lisa."

Arnesen-Davidson takes on a key role at the school in helping others grow in their knowledge of Indigenous culture and history. She shares the land acknowledgement at school and community events, and the school has asked her to assist with developing a new school land acknowledgement, which she has enthusiastically accepted.

Both Northrup and Weststrate admire the way Arnesen-Davidson has involved herself in the school. They point to her excellent academic standing, strong work ethic, participation in - and demonstrated leadership in - school team sports, and membership on the student council.

Also, in Chinook's Edge, Arnesen-Davidson has served as an Indigenous student representative on the division's Students Matter committee, which provides input into division plans and programs.

Arnesen-Davidson is grateful to her mother and grandmother for teaching her about her Indigenous culture. She looks forward to summers, when she spends time with her grandmother in Saskatchewan, attending pow wows and learning more.

Arnesen-Davidson proudly wears a ribbon skirt her grandmother made for her, and when she talks about it, she smiles broadly.

Upon learning that her granddaughter had been nominated for an award, Sharon Arnesen said she was emotional.

"I'm proud of Lisa for taking the wisdom given to her, passed down from me and her mother, and carrying that forward. She is proud of where she came from, and that's what I always hoped for her," said Sharon Arnesen.

Arnesen said, "I always said to Lisa - stand tall and be proud of who you are. Voice your opinion and speak your mind. People will listen."



Top: Lisa Arnesen-Davidson on her school basketball team (center row, far right).

Bottom: Arnesen-Davidson is also on the school's honour roll, and is shown here with other recipients (back row, 3rd from the right) .



Chinook's Edge honour band tradition resumes: students showcase musical talents this week in Olds



Penhold Crossing teacher, Destiny Rothenburg, helps students prepare for the honour band experience.

Junior and high school band students from through Chinook's Edge are tuning up for an experience that promises to be note-worthy. Dozens of the division's junior high and high school band students have been selected to participate in honour band by their band teachers. Honour band is an opportunity that happens in Chinook's Edge once every two years, and is something not all school divisions provide. The Chinook's Edge tradition is resuming in 2024 for the first time since the pandemic.

On the day of the concert, students gather together having rehearsed the music in their individual schools with their band teachers. Once all of the honour band students are gathered together, they work with a guest conductor on polishing the music and making it performance ready.

This year, **the senior high band concert is on Monday, February 12 at 7 pm. The junior high band concert is on Tuesday February 13, at 7 pm.** Both will be held at the Olds TransCanada Theatre. Members of the public are welcome to attend.

"Honour Band is an important opportunity for students to go above and beyond with their music, while working with other dedicated musicians such as themselves," said Michael Gouge, band teacher, Hugh Sutherland School in Carstairs.

"Honour Band provides not only a great challenge for our music students as an opportunity to grow their musical abilities, but also acts as a means to recognize the hard work those students have put in order to be selected for the Honour Band," said Gouge.

"Honour Band students are also provided with the excellent opportunity to work with guest conductors and clinicians who provide a wealth of knowledge that will grow their independent musical talents as well as their ensemble skills. The Honour Band program also provides a great sense of community and collaboration amongst our schools in our division. Both students and staff are provided with opportunities to meet and learn from other musicians with our Chinook's Edge musical community," said Gouge.

Penhold Crossing Grade 8 student, Madalyn St-Jean, said she is looking forward to the experience. ***"I'm excited to meet new people, learn new things and get better at playing. I think honour band is good to get people out of their comfort zones," said St-Jean.***

This year's guest conductor is Kathie Van Lare, who has been teaching music in the Calgary area for 35 years. Retired from full time teaching, Van Lare continues to direct the Foothills Music Society Concert Band, the Westwinds Music Society Gold Jazz South Big Band, and the Calgary Women's Jazz Orchestra. She is also the Co-President of the Alberta chapter of Women Band Directors International.



Reed Ranch and Elnora staff form partnership for collaborative learning

Teachers and support staff from Reed Ranch School and Elnora School are enjoying a new opportunity to collaborate. During the 2023-24 school year, they have been meeting together on professional learning days.

“Elnora and Reed Ranch have a great deal in common. Both schools are small, rural schools with a reputation of skillfully combining learning, relationships, and community,” said Ray Hoppins, Associate Superintendent, Chinook’s Edge School Division. “Given that we are more collaborative than ever before in our school division, bringing the staff from both schools to share celebrations, strategies, and next steps in learning was a natural next step. The schools are physically 40-minutes apart, but these days, that’s closer than you think.”

Erin Machell, Reed Ranch Principal, said, ***“Bringing the staff together allows our teachers the opportunity to collaborate with others who teach a multiple grade classroom. With the implementation of new curriculums, it has been particularly essential.”***

“Along with teachers, our educational assistants, administrative assistants and myself as an administrator, all appreciate the opportunity to come together with other staff who work in a smaller school setting to learn and support one another,” said Machell. “As our relationship continues to develop, several staff members have taken the opportunity to collaborate further with teachers outside of our professional learning days.”

Shauna Peterson, a teacher at Elnora School, said, ***“I love that I can connect with teacher in another small school who share our reality. We are able to share resources and ideas. And it is another person to whom you can reach out if you are stuck or in need of help.”***



Kendis Tetzlaff, a teacher at Reed Ranch School, said, ***“As we are both small, rural schools, it has been extremely valuable for the Reed Ranch and Elnora teaching staff to meet together during our professional learning days. Based on our common teaching environments, this has given us an opportunity to collaborate and work together to establish attainable and manageable goals.”***

“We have also created a strong network which will open up opportunities to share valuable teaching resources to enhance our productivity and learning experiences for our students,” said Tetzlaff.

Leana Howard, Elnora School Principal, said, ***“One of the biggest benefits I have observed is the conversation between staff in all roles. From administrative support to teachers and educational assistants, each has jumped right in sharing knowledge, strategies, stories and resources. This collaboration is so beneficial as our small schools work as well oiled machines but are also islands to ourselves at times. By being together with another school, similar in configuration, we can get off our island and support each other in best practices which only makes us better.”***

