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## SIEF Celebrates International Women’s Day

**The Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation (SIEF), National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association (NACCA) and Startup Canada partnered to celebrate International Women’s Day.**

**Through NACCA’s partnership with Startup Canada, they launched a role model campaign that featured successful Indigenous Women entrepreneurs.**

**SIEF is excited to feature Kellie Wuttunee in celebration of International Women’s Day.**

**SIEF, with support from NACCA, also hosted two business information workshops on March 10 -11, 2021, for Indigenous women wanting to venture into business.**

**T**iffany Carrier is the founder of Newo Designs, an Indigenous language-inspired clothing and apparel business on Piapot First Nation. Regan Gamble operates SheDrives Paphew, a delivery service that focuses on assisting the elderly. She will deliver everything from groceries to prescriptions. Tiffany and Regan are still wading through the early stages of

running their own business. They welcome any advice and guidance from fellow entrepreneurs, especially like-minded Indigenous women in similar situations.

Raven Shingoose is an automotive service tech who started detailing vehicles from her driveway. Raven aspires to own her own two-bay detailing shop in the new future. Getting there means following a path she has never been down.

All three women attended one of two business information workshops for Indigenous women in March hosted by the Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation (SIEF). Tiffany, Regan and Raven were three of 20 women in each workshop who gained valuable knowledge that one day could help them in achieving their business goals.

“I felt it would be beneficial for my business,” Tiffany said about attending the workshop. “The information that was given was very informative and useful.”

“I found there was so much information I didn’t know was there,” Raven said. “I felt like it opened my eyes that pursuing my business with a business plan is a huge opportunity. I had no idea there was financing and grants available to me.”



Raven



Tiffany



Regan

**“The workshop helped me to reach out more on my journey. I had no clue there were other resources and agencies to assist with different phases of building your business or becoming your own entrepreneur.”**

- REGAN GAMBLE, SHEDRIVES PAPHREW DELIVERY SERVICE

Carolyn Lachance served as facilitator of the workshops. Carolyn and her husband have a blended family with 10 children, eight of which are young women. Seven of their eight daughters work full-time jobs and raise their own children.

Part of Carolyn’s message to the women at the workshop was to understand that women are more than just caregivers in the home.

“Historically, women took care of the home and made sure the family was safe and taken care of. In 2021, taking care of the family doesn’t necessarily mean making soup and sandwiches for lunch. we’re in a time where we need to have a two-income family in order to be comfortable.”

The workshop covered several topics to support women who are looking to start, pivot or grow a business.

The workshop was made up of five different modules: Entrepreneurship and why it is a promising pathway; stages of business development; effective business practices; adaption and resilience; supports for Indigenous women entrepreneurs.

The Indigenous Women Entrepreneurship project hopes to increase the number of Indigenous women engaging in entrepreneurship and business development in Canada. As part of the project, National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association developed tools and resources specifically geared towards Indigenous women to increase their participation in entrepreneurship.

Access to business support and advice for Indigenous women entrepreneurs is needed now more than ever

amid the economic crisis because of COVID-19. These workshops for Indigenous women entrepreneurs are hosted by SIEF (an Aboriginal Financial Institution) to address the gender-specific challenges that they are facing as a result of COVID-19.

“You’re talking about the supports that are available, the opportunities that are available,” Carolyn added. “Underneath everything, the main message here could be about empowerment and taking charge of their lives and their business. It’s about how they need to believe in themselves and make sure that all the work is done.”

The workshop was filled almost immediately, with a waiting list of women hoping to join. SIEF hopes to host more workshops for both men and women in the fall.

Carolyn said the majority of feedback she has received from attendees focused on the value of learning more about the financial supports and opportunities available. She added that talking about finances and credit aren’t common topics of discussion among Indigenous people.

“We don’t talk about credit or debt or those sorts of things. Philosophically, we take what we need and make sure there’s enough for tomorrow. We don’t hoard,” she said. “When you’re looking at that kind of philosophy with money, it just doesn’t fit.”

**“This generation is starting to see why our kids need to understand debt and savings accounts and why it’s important for parents to set up these systems so our children will be able to start their adult life on solid footing.”**

- CAROLYN LACHANCE, WORKSHOP FACILITATOR

Regan said the information she absorbed during the workshop was invaluable and that she wouldn’t hesitate to sign up for similar workshops in the future.

“I’ve got a more solid understanding and I’m excited to begin my actual business plan.”

# KELLIE

# WUTTUNEE



WUTTUNEE LAW OFFICE - Saskatoon, SK

**K**ellie Wuttunee brings force and conviction to any conversation. Her journey has been about facing tough times, and then to just keep on going. "Even in law school," she recounts, "I wasn't the student that got selected for things; finding my way through was tough, and then I went completely out on my own, into business, right out of law school."

Wuttunee Law Office, in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan offers services in Indigenous Law, to Administrative, and even Will and Estate Law. Her personal and professional experiences certainly support her ability to take on all kinds of different work. She mentions she has looked at things in the past, and said to herself, "If I can't do this, then I'm not doing something right."

Her steadfast determination shows, even in the way she speaks, "You dive in kicking and you either drown or you start kicking your arms and legs until you get there," and then laughs, "I started kicking!"

With a background in social work, as well as in the legal profession, Kellie talks freely about her observations over the years. "I just wanted to do more," she says, "I saw how things were going under the Child Welfare Act, and decided I wanted to work to help keep kids with their families instead of taking kids away." So, with her three children in tow, she picked up and moved across the country, to pursue further education, and in her

words, just "went for it". "I applied to only one law school," she recalls, "and I got in!"

"I did a lot of soul searching - about how I wanted to impact my children, my community, and of course, myself. There was no one saying, hey, here is an opportunity for you. I just kept fighting for respect, to not be treated as 'less than'. And I can talk about that - that is the 'human' in all of us, to be able to talk about these things. I get frustrated, but I never victimize myself, regardless of circumstances." And then she adds, "Given the odds, and where I've been, it really makes me believe in choices. I always keep working on myself; as a human being you never stop growing and you never stop learning."

She begins to talk about Indigenous women, as entrepreneurs, as mothers, as members of a bigger community. "We, as women, need to be more accepting of our accomplishments. It's okay to be humble, but it's even more okay to be happy with our accomplishments."

She chuckles as she talks about running her own business. "No one teaches you how to run a business, in law school, you're there to learn about law. So, learning how to manage a business, and file management, accounting, all of those things, I had to just learn." Asking for help and support was a big deal too. "Relying on mentors was important," she claims, "it's part of what got me here."

She refers to a big support in her life, the Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation, and says, "They helped me so much in my first two years of business. I am so grateful. Without their help, and the way they do things, I don't know if I'd still be running my business."

She has a strong and heartfelt mandate, both in her personal life, and in her business. "To grow, and to help other women grow, too. I really just want to help people, that's all."

It's undeniable that, with her fiery spirit and tenacious commitment, she will continue to do just that.



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Cree Cheechoo

## Continuing Education

BY MARTIN CHARLTON COMMUNICATIONS

**Cree Cheechoo thought her days of doing homework and taking quizzes were long behind her.**

**H**er determination and desire to serve her clients at a higher level is what convinced Cree to return to the classroom – a virtual classroom.

After nearly a year of studying through the Saskatchewan Economic Development Alliance (SEDA), Cree completed her online course in Community and Economic Development and received her certificate in November 2020.

“It’s definitely a sense of accomplishment,” Cree said. “There was a lot of information with this course ... a lot of things I did not know that I feel can benefit me and my clients more now that I do have that knowledge.”

“I didn’t really plan on furthering my education at all,” she said. “But I just felt I owed it to my clients to gain more knowledge. I wanted to be more confident with what I was telling them so I could guide them in the right direction.”

Cree has been a Business Development Officer with the Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation (SIEF) for more than five years and has been building her client base along the way.

She remembered talking to Verona Thibault, the CEO at SEDA, a few years ago about the online courses available. Cree said at the time she didn’t offer serious thought to furthering her education and didn’t have the time that is needed to dedicate to the program.

But Cree’s thinking changed over time until she decided it would be best for her and for her clients to learn more about the business.

Some clients would phone and ask for advice about certain things and there were times where I didn’t really have the answers they were looking for,” Cree said. “I figured I had to take some extra training in order to help out my clients more than what I was. I wanted that extra

knowledge so I could assist them more with their business and I wouldn’t have to refer them to other people.

SIEF covered the cost of the course and Cree was on her way. She continued to work full-time for SIEF and spent more than a few evenings and weekends studying, taking quizzes and completing assignments throughout the duration of the online course.

She successfully completed the course in November.

“There was a lot of work to do, but I’m glad I did it,” Cree said. “It was something that was good for me and it’ll be good for my clients as well.”

### Five-year Staff Service Award

#### Cree Cheechoo

**C**ree Cheechoo is a member of the Moose Cree First Nation in Ontario. She was raised in Saskatchewan as her father is from the James Smith Cree Nation. Cree began her career at SIEF in March of 2016 as an Administrative Assistant. She has diligently worked her way to become a Business Development Officer. Her education history involves Indigenous social work, office administration and professional community and economic development. Cree represents SIEF on the Matchstick Program through Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan as well as being on the working group for Indigenous Commercial Fisheries of Saskatchewan. Cree is also very involved with co-ordinating the Indigenous Women’s Entrepreneur Workshop program.



Amanda Louison

## SIEF Board of Director

**Lending a helping hand is something Amanda Louison is accustomed to doing.**

**F**or much of her adult life, she has dedicated her time to assisting others in need. Whether it be a ride to school or with an important issue on her First Nation, Amanda was there to listen and to help.

That is why her new role as a Board of Director with the Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation is an ideal fit.

“I have an opportunity to work with and help my people. I just like working for my people and helping them make decisions and giving them an opportunity,” Amanda said.

“I want to empower our First Nations people to do well by helping themselves and by working hard.”

Amanda’s involvement with SIEF began in 2015 when she was the FSIN Senate appointment representative. Amanda was elected as a member of the SIEF Board of Directors at the Annual General Meeting held in November of 2020.

“I want to be a part of the bigger picture ... to see my people reach their dreams,” she said. “In a lot of ways, it could be seen as mentoring and offering advice.”

“It brings a smile to your face in knowing that some of our people can be successful. You get a good feeling in your heart when you see them getting started.”

Amanda makes her home in the Qu’Appelle Valley and is a member of the Kahkewistahaw First Nation, to which she served as Chief for one term (1995-1997). She also was a band councillor for 12 years.

She is a certified electoral officer for First Nation band elections.

She and her husband Lionel (Urbin) are beloved members of the community. Urbin was a cattle, horseman and grain farmer in the area. However, he is most well known for being a school bus driver on Kahkewistahaw for 45 years. Amanda also was a school bus driver.

Urbin passed away in June 2019 from complications related to a serious vehicle crash. The couple was to have celebrated their 50th anniversary just a few months later.

**“Some days can get lonely, but I find a way to pick myself up and get moving. Urbin wouldn’t want me to be sad,” she said. “Staying busy and working helps me a lot ... and I have my three grandsons, who are very dear to my heart.”**

Amanda has a son who is a manager at a First Nation Gas and Convenience store and a daughter working at Mosaic Mine in Esterhazy.

## Women in Business

### The Facts:

1. Indigenous women make up 41 per cent of all Indigenous entrepreneurs in Canada.
2. The growth rate between 2011 and 2016 was 46 per cent for Indigenous women entrepreneurs compared to 37 per cent for Indigenous men entrepreneurs.
3. Women tend to start smaller, often home-based, or part-time businesses.
4. Women-owned businesses tend to create more jobs than male-owned businesses.
5. 78 per cent of Indigenous women start their businesses using personal savings.
6. 29 per cent of the businesses supported by the AFI network are 100-per-cent owned by Indigenous women.

1 Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Population Profile, 2016 Census

2 Ibid.

3 NACCA, National Indigenous Women Entrepreneurship Survey, 2020

4 NACCA, Businesses Supported by Aboriginal Economic Programs in 2019-2020

5 NACCA, National Indigenous Women Entrepreneurship Survey, 2020

6 NACCA, Annual Report, 2018/19-2019/20

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