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Anyone who has lived in Calgary knows the name Crowchild. Of the road that bridges the Bow River, Chief Crowchild famously said, *“Now as I cut this ribbon, may this be a symbol of cutting all barriers between all peoples for all time to come. May all those who use the Crowchild Trail, travel both ways in safety and with dignity and in friendship for all.”* His example forged a path not just for better relations between Canadians and his people, the Tsuu T’ina, but for more acceptance and recognition of First Nations people in the wider global scene.

On April 12th, 1899, Chief David Crowchild was born to Mark Crowchild and Sarah Big Plume on the Sarcee reserve. As a young adult, he regularly attended First Nations fairs and the Stampede, where he promoted and loved competing in chuckwagon racing for more than twenty years with his horses. He camped his teepee in the Teepee Village every year. The spirit of Calgary’s multicultural Stampede carried through when he brought his love of horses back to the reserve to raise them and grow crops. It is obvious that David Crowchild understood meaningful work from a young age, and this may have later inspired him when he campaigned for more independence for his people. He became head chief of the Sarcee nation in 1947 and led for five years, helping to farm their 200 acres of land, encouraging the children to play sports such as hockey, and to attend school. Today, Chief Crowchild is remembered as a great leader who guided his people not just within the framework of a society still working towards equality and acceptance, but to push for changes and improvement within his community. By encouraging jobs and education, Chief Crowchild did not wait for change to happen - he changed the world himself. At the opening of the road named after him, he said *“I have never been a warrior, but all my life I have tried to stand up for what was right and just - not only for my own people - but for those just conditions and laws which affect us all.”* He represented his people in 1939 during the royal visit, and was a founding member of the Indian Association of Calgary. In the revision of the Indian Act in 1947, he appeared before both the House of Commons and the Senate to argue and succeed in an effort for Treaty Indians to be allowed Old Age Assistance. John Laurie, First Nations rights activist, befriended him and described him as: *“Possessed of genuine personal charm and quick wit, Dave has been an excellent ambassador for his people and Indians generally.”* He also admired Crowchild’s negotiations with the Indian Affairs Branch for standing his ground but compromising when both sides would benefit. John Laurie was right when he described Chief Crowchild as a man ahead of his time.

Chief Crowchild supported his community by campaigning for jobs and education on the reserve to increase self-sufficiency. He understood that if his people weren’t allowed the same opportunities and education as other people, the gap between Canadians and First Nations would never be crossed, or even grow. Crowchild Trail is one of the main arteries of traffic running through northwest Calgary, through downtown, to southwest Calgary, and hundreds of people use it every day to go to and from work and connect with family. Crowchild’s efforts towards reconciliation are also valuable today when we strive towards better relations. Without his influence, Canada would not be nearly so far along the path to reunion with our Indigenous

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brothers and sisters. The residential schools and other shameful hallmarks of Canada's past with the Indigenous people is not something that can be ignored any longer, and we should look to Chief Crowchild's example as to how we can begin to heal and bridge our nations- an example that stretches back to when his family traveled the trails that crossed Canada before roads did and forged friendships with the pioneers. Earlier, his ancestor, Chief Bull Head, followed those trails to sign Treaty No. 7 with representatives of Queen Victoria. Today, the results of the treaties still affect First Nations citizens in the form of prejudice and discrimination. The REDress project illustrates the prejudice that has unfortunately not been left in the past. Indigenous women are found missing and murdered at a much higher rate than other ethnicities. Jaime Black, a Metis artist, has called attention to this by hanging red dresses around Canada. Similarly, Chief Crowchild campaigned his whole life to bring equality to all Indigenous persons in an age where women still did not have the right to vote. He would have dealt with this issue by making his voice heard, appearing in front of high legislative members, and working towards them to a solution. In a world where hate can be spoken so easily online and important stories can be held back, someone like Chief Crowchild is needed to make known the injustice and offer peaceful ways to fix it.

Chief Crowchild has inspired me to stand up for my beliefs of acceptance and equality. In youth group, I discussed the disproportionate amount of missing and murdered Indigenous women. In school, I learned about the Treaties and how they contributed to the root causes of the discrimination against Indigenous people. During Chief Crowchild's time, residential schools still existed, and he had to deal with the prejudices of people, some of which held high government positions, that thought his culture was 'inferior'. Yet he still continued to campaign for the rights of not just his Tsuu T'ina nation, but all First Nations, and, like Martin Luther King Jr., not to separate them from Canadians but to coexist in a better, more equal world. I helped with the GSA club in my school to foster more acceptance in the community by raising money to buy additional inclusive books for the library. I was accepted to the International Baccalaureate program offered at Winston Churchill, which would provide me opportunities to learn from people of different nationalities. Another important part of my life is Girl Guides, where the perspective is shared that it is important to accept people from all walks of life for the different perspectives and ideas they can offer to an inclusive community. I take a leadership role in my troop by arranging activities to further bonding such as camps. Equality can only happen when we accept people for who they are without discrimination.

In conclusion, Chief Crowchild's efforts are an important bridge to realizing that reconciliation is the vital next step in Canada's future, and that we must recognize all people on this land as equal Canadians. In a world where it is too easy to take the side of one group of people or another, especially when extreme groups cause hard divides, it is important to hold to the principles of human dignity. Nothing good will come of a society divided because of past injustices, but forgiveness cannot be reached if the past is not acknowledged as well. The coming

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years will have to be walked together, and we must look to our forebears on how to navigate the road.

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