

## Red Crow, Mékaisto

*A flowing stream weaves between rocks - never ceasing in its path.*

The Kanai people or the Blood Tribe had wandered the vast plains to the Rocky Mountains for centuries, pursuing the buffalo. Perhaps this unconstrained way of life allowed for Red Crow to develop into the figure he is known as today. Red Crow possessed extraordinary bravery, persistence, and resilience, which led his people during a time of tumultuous change. His efforts have created opportunities to connect people from all walks of life in Canada and preserve a unique culture.

Red Crow was born to a line of chiefs in ca. 1830 next to the Belly River in what is now modern Alberta. As a youth, he would be the first to defend his clan and participate in raids, eventually taking on the name Red Crow. He was a talented warrior, but ill-tempered and rash. During an alcohol-fueled argument, Red Crow killed his brother. This traumatic event and the remorse he felt changed him completely. He wearily stated, "I've had enough war and trouble." The reflection of this experience transformed him from an impulsive youth to a wise leader and a warrior to a peacemaker.

As the devastation of smallpox and starvation spread throughout his clan, Red Crow knew he needed to bring stability to his people. To do this, he focused on building peaceful relations with the North-West Mounted Police. He also was a passionate advocate and seized every opportunity to share his voice and perspective for his people. With their future in mind, Red Crow signed Treaty 7. When he realized that the Treaty had not been fulfilled accordingly, Red Crow grudgingly accepted that it was time for a change. He looked forwards and instead emphasized education and farming by leading by example. These were crucial factors in transitioning his people to a different societal construct. Red Crow truly believed that his people were the "cream of creation" and instilled a sense of self-respect within them that proved vital in later years. By growing vegetables on their reserve and selling their horses for cattle, the Blood Tribe managed to raise one of the biggest herds and crops on the reserves. As well, Red Crow also solved issues on the reserves, maintained control over the Blood Tribe, and refused the attempts of the Indian Agents who tried to give total authority to the government. He negotiated with the Canadian government concerning the promises in the Treaty, and it was through his persistence that the Sun Dance, a traditional dance, was restored in later years. Red Crow's contributions have shaped present-day Alberta by helping restore a fundamental part of our past. His efforts represent the resilience of a people to preserve their culture. Alberta has one of the fastest-growing indigenous communities, and they play an instrumental part in our economy, society, and culture. His actions have also made it possible for Albertans today to learn about the events and people who have shaped our province. On August 28th, 1900, Red Crow crossed the Belly River for the last time, but his legacy lives on to this day.

Throughout his life, Red Crow pressed for the reinstatement of the Sun Dance. He negotiated patiently with the government, up until his very last breath. The Sun Dance was an expression of their identity, culture, and religion. It represented their beliefs as a people, their ancestor's views, and a history that stretched millenniums over the delicate threads of time. Similarly, a controversial issue in Canada, especially in Quebec, is religious freedom. Bill 21

prohibits public figures of "authority" from wearing religious items while on duty. Religious items have the same importance as they represent a person's unique identity. However, supporters believe that the passing of this bill allows for Quebec to become a more secular society. I think that this bill isolates minorities and creates a divide in Quebec and Canada. Diversity of expression and culture is what makes Canada unique; different opinions enrich our culture. If Red Crow were in a situation where he and his people were not allowed to wear traditional or religious items while working, he would fight for the rights of people being affected and gain support. Red Crow would also confer with the government and create a protest group consisting of people who have the same beliefs. Lastly, he would persist until the bill was suspended or repealed, or until time took him away.

Chief Red Crow has inspired me to be a leader at home, in my community, and school. His bravery, respect for others, and persistence has influenced me to continue to strive for excellence and stand up for my beliefs. As a child and even now, reading has provided me with an escape from this world. I volunteer at the library in my community in hopes of encouraging children to discover the simplicity in picking up a book and realizing how literature can connect all different kinds of people. As well, Red Crow's persistence is something that has translated deeply into my life. I have spent almost 12 years studying and playing piano. As with every journey, I faced hardship and adversity, but striving for excellence in this field and the feeling of success has driven me for the past decade. Currently, my friend and I are developing a business that will allow us to share our experience in classical music, so others can also find their fulfillment and their passion. These are the ways I can transform my beliefs into something tangible. Red Crow's bravery has motivated me to push my comfort zone. I have done this by signing up for ToastMasters and participating in debate lessons so that I can meet new people and speak about issues I feel strongly about, such as discrimination and gender equality. Last summer, I participated in the ATB Future Transformer Camp, where I collaborated and led my team in building an innovative product and website. I came to a realization that the end goal was only possible through teamwork and leadership. Authentic leadership is not a simple management operation. Leadership, like what Red Crow displayed, is the ability to empathize, value, trust, and work with others. I'm looking forward to applying this principle in the future.

Red Crow was like a flowing stream, gracefully facing obstacles. He listened and fought for his people and adapted to constraints to give them a better life. Rivers and streams carve individual paths while still obeying nature. Red Crow's will and spirit were perpetual, just like a stream on its way to a great, big ocean - a body of water that connects all life on Earth. As individuals and as a nation, we should continuously strive for change to create a future of our own.

*A drop of water is enough to make clouds burst, and oceans swell.*

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