

The Life of Dr. Anne Anderson

By: Malaya Murray

Have you ever wondered why so many schools are named after a person? No? Well I had this exact thought not too long ago when I found out that my school is named after the infamous Johnny Bright. After learning this hero's story, I soon found out that so many schools near me are named after an inspirational person in time, including the brand new Edmonton High school, Dr. Anne Anderson.

Every Saturday morning, my parents go to the gym at the Dr. Anne Anderson High School. One morning my dad spotted a photo of the school's namesake. We soon learned that Dr. Anne was an Albertan and a very influential person in people's lives. This got me thinking. How fun and interesting would it be to learn all about a person who has done so many amazing things for others, which is exactly what I will be writing about today.

Dr. Anderson was a remarkable woman who fought to keep her language and culture alive. As a child Anne was very small and her mother feared she would not survive. She was both a teacher and an author with many famous books about the Cree language including "*The Metis Cree Dictionary* and *The First Metis-A New Nation*."

Dr. Anderson was born on a farm outside of St Albert, Alberta. She was one of ten children and her parents were a Metis woman, Elizabeth Callihoo and a Metis-Scottish man, William Gairdner. An interesting side note, my dad grew up playing hockey in the hamlet of Calahoo, which is named after the Michel Callihoo Band. Their leader was Yellowhead, the famous indigenous chief who also has a rich history in Edmonton. All this history is tied to Dr. Anne Anderson and her family and the amazing things she and others have accomplished to leave such a legacy.

Dr. Anne was the oldest child out of ten, and after her father died of appendicitis she had to work hard to help support her family. Not long after her father's passing, Anne promised her mother, who was unwell, that she would keep the Cree language alive by both teaching it to others and writing it down for many different people to read. Canada has an unfortunate history of preventing children from speaking their traditional languages. Fortunately, Dr. Anne fought to stop this by speaking her mind and explaining why being able to speak your own language is so important to indigenous cultures. Due to these efforts, this interest has grown to become a huge passion of many different people who all are helping new generations learn and support this cause.

As time went on, Dr. Anne accomplished more than she had ever imagined. She began as a teacher by placing an ad in the paper offering to help tutor people in Cree. Dr. Anne did not

expect many responses, but with fifty people interested, she began to teach private Cree lessons and soon started to teach at Edmonton public schools. After sixteen years of teaching at Edmonton public schools, Anderson opened the Dr. Anne Anderson Native Heritage and Cultural Centre in 1984. The centre was used for many things, such as a community hub, Cree classes for both children and adults, and a library.

Not only was Dr. Anne an extremely successful teacher, but she was also an author, who wrote many influential books about Metis culture and persevering the Metis-Cree language. Anne's first book, *Let's Learn Cree*, was published in 1970. Shortly after, Dr. Anne founded Cree Productions, a company that made educational resources that could further help teach the Cree language. While Cree Productions thrived, Anne wrote more books, not only on the Cree language, but also about Metis history, herbal remedies, children's coloring books and even cookbooks! Dr. Anne had published over 100 books, her most memorable being "Dr. Anne Anderson's Cree Dictionary." She took a 38,000-word English dictionary and translated it into a full Cree dictionary. Over the years Dr. Anne continued to add to this dictionary making it even more detailed.

How has Dr. Anne inspired me to be a champion? She inspired me to never give up on what I know is right, and no matter what people say, continue to push hard for what I believe in. She helped me realize that all of Alberta's history and culture is interconnected, and we need to respect our differences and continue to learn from one another. In the future, I will use what I have learned from Dr. Anne to be a leader in my own community. My future plans include one day becoming a teacher myself and teaching others the importance of learning about their own cultural heritage. Another dream I have is to become a professional author like Dr. Anne Anderson, but instead my focus will be on fiction writing. It is exciting to think about these future goals and how they will shape the person I will become.

This inspirational woman passed away at the age of 91. She was a grandmother, a teacher, and a linguist who wrote more than 90 books on the Cree language, herbs, Metis legends and even children's coloring books. Dr. Anne Anderson is a woman that cannot be described with just a few words. But I'm going to do it anyway. Anne was a fighter, a leader and an incredible role model for her culture. She spent most of her life devoted to a promise to her late mother. And even though she had some bumps along the way, Dr. Anne fought hard to keep this promise alive. She is such a historic figure in Alberta's history, and as you can see, one person can really make a difference in many people's lives. So next time you're driving around our beautiful province, pay attention to the many names of our roads, parks and schools, and ask yourself, who were these people, and how did their lives create meaningful change for all Albertans?

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