

Dr. Anne Anderson: The Woman I Aspire To Be

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It was only a recent update in which Indigenous history and culture was introduced to the Alberta curriculum. Since then, many changes have occurred nationwide regarding Indigenous people. We have National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, where we acknowledge and educate ourselves about residential schools. On June 21st, we celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day, honouring their extensive contributions to all of Canada. Dr. Anne Anderson is one of the pioneers of this change because of her roots, lessons, and publications. She is the woman I aspire to be, and I cannot imagine the world without her.

Dr. Anne Anderson was born in 1906 to Elizabeth Calihoo and William Joseph Gairdner. She was born near St. Albert on a river lot farm. Being the eldest of ten children, she had to work when she was 16 to aid her family after her father died. Subsequently, Anne was educated until grade 10 at the Bellerose School and the Grey Nuns Convent. At school, she could only learn in English, thus her mother ensured that their family spoke Cree at home. Dr. Anne Anderson's mother's key phrase was, "The white lady at school can teach you English, but this Indian home must always have the Cree language." Later, she married William Callihoe in 1925, moving to a farm north of Spruce Grove. Together they raised two children, Patricia and Herbert. However, the children were not taught Cree in hopes they wouldn't be discriminated against. She lived in Oregon temporarily and married Joseph Anderson in 1947. That year, she was a supervisor for the Fishing Lake Metis Settlement and took a typing course. In addition, Anne worked as a nurse, gaining many skills throughout her life. After some time, she created her company, Cree Productions, and married Alexander Irvine.

As Elizabeth Calihoo was about to die, she made her daughter promise her one thing. Dr. Anne Anderson must not let the Cree language be annihilated. She fulfilled her promise to her mother by teaching the Cree language to others. At the beginning of this journey, she put an ad in the newspaper offering tutoring sessions about Cree. Anne only thought she'd receive ten responses, but was appalled when she got fifty. First, she taught private lessons but then expanded to Edmonton public schools. Although the students in the schools were very excited and wanted to stay longer to learn, only half-hour sessions per day were allowed. Thus, Dr. Anne Anderson declared, "Some day I'm going to have my own school." In 1984, she opened the Dr. Anne Anderson Native Heritage and Cultural Centre. This place gave Cree lessons for people of all ages but also had a library, cultural artifacts, and a shop full of Indigenous arts and crafts. She founded this community hub with mostly her own money and experienced many financial challenges. In the face of all this, she employed other teachers. Nevertheless, she taught hundreds of people at the University of Alberta, Grant McEwan, Charles Camsell Hospital, Fort

Saskatchewan Correctional Centre, the Young Women's Christian Association, and children in group homes.

Another way of fulfilling her promise to her mother was by writing many books in Cree by using her skill of typewriting. In 1970, she published Let's Learn Cree. It was a revolutionary textbook because all previous Cree texts were religious stories. With her company, Cree Productions, she wrote books that involved more than the Cree Language. For example, she wrote books about Metis history, herbal remedies, Indigenous legends, children's colouring books, and cookbooks. Dr. Anne wrote almost 100 publications, but one was the most groundbreaking. In 1975, she created Dr. Anne Anderson's Metis Cree Dictionary, a translation of a 38000 English dictionary. She even added new words as technologies were developed, improving her dictionary as the years passed. Anne didn't end up stopping there as she produced, The First Metis - A New Nation, a book that showcased the history of numerous Metis families in Alberta. It allowed her to display how life has drastically changed for Indigenous people near and in Edmonton. Her literary works prevent the Cree language, and Indigenous culture and history from being forgotten.

The Indigenous people faced many horrors, and their language, culture, and history were threatened to go extinct. Even though the aftermath of cultural genocide and generational trauma from residential schools continues today, Anne helped the most she could to alleviate the damage. In the short term, she gifted Indigenous people with their language and a sense of belonging. It gave them the foundation they needed to succeed. Her education has empowered Indigenous people to advocate for their rights and continue working until they fully get what they deserve. Due to this, she has won the Alberta Achievement Award, the Order of Canada, the Edmonton Female Citizenship Award, and an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Alberta. In Edmonton, she has a park and a high school named after her. Not only has she left a legacy to the public, but also to those near her. A Metis Elder called her, "the heart of the (Metis) Nation," and her grandson said, "She was always ready to build things that would last a long time... people." Indeed she has left her mark on this world through her accomplishments and the hearts she's touched.

One person's heart she's touched is mine. When I first heard of the name of the new high school being built near me, I was intrigued about who it was named after. As I researched Dr. Anne's story, I couldn't help but feel a wave of passion to live up to her footsteps. Since then, I have taken action to embrace my Mongolian heritage. First, I was a leader during the Heritage Festival for the Mongolia Pavilion. Leading people through a yurt, I explained the significance of each item within it. I was delighted to represent my country and enlighten others about it. From the moment I held a bow and arrow, a clear bond was formed with my ancestors. Last year, I took up the sport of archery and participated in this year's Alberta Winter Games, winning a bronze medal. The Capital Region Archery Club played an immense role in my success, so I

fulfilled my volunteer hours by attending meetings that impacted the club. At home, I have made my fluency in Mongolian a key concern, so I practise every night to become fluent. This year, I took up the option of Leadership and have dedicated time to volunteering around my school, doing my best to help others. For instance, I was the Master of Ceremonies for my Junior High Pep Rally and the Remembrance Day ceremony. I also worked for free as the cashier at my school store and taught children how to read in a program called Read2Gether. While educating the child, I couldn't help but imagine if the reading strategies I used were also ones Anne used. Contributing to my community grants me a sense of pride and joy since Dr. Anne Anderson would applaud me for leaving my mark on the world. However, I am still going.

My future goals are to become an executive member of my archery club. By serving those in my Archery community, I wish to influence them to keep participating and cherish this sport as much as I do. At the Heritage Festival, I plan on showcasing my culture more through dance because I have prior experience. Furthermore, I plan to learn horse riding and combine it with archery to perform Horse Archery. This is a tradition that distinctly connects to my soul. Another goal is to teach the younger children in my community the Mongolian language, as most speak English. One day, through proper fundraising and efforts, I plan to be a leader in creating a Mongolian cultural hub similar to what Anne did. This way, future Canadian-Mongolians will always feel tied to their heritage. Unlike my generation, they will be immersed in their culture and history, never having to feel lost. I thank Dr. Anne Anderson for inspiring me to spread and educate myself about my culture.

Dr. Anne Anderson is the woman who has revolutionized the world for Indigenous people and has impacted anyone who has heard of her story. Her actions highlight the Seven Grandfather Teachings: Humility, Bravery, Honesty, Wisdom, Truth, Respect, and Love. She was always humble, brave, and honest in whatever she did and spread wisdom and truth through her teachings and books of the Cree language. For all of the work she did, she garnered lots of love and respect. I am glad I live in a world where Dr. Anne Anderson existed, and her story shall forever live in my heart and hundreds of others.

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