

# Circles of Light

June 2001 – Number 13

**CFDM**

## On the Air with Flying Dust Radio

by Michael Fisher

The request line at CFDM, 105.7 FM is (almost) always open, so **Babes Derocher** is handling the telephone, reaching for the latest “Green Day” CD and twiddling dials and knobs on the mixing board in front of him.

Without missing a beat, the last song bleeds into the next, a request is taken and the silver-tongued Derocher is ready to resume the interview in the Flying Dust First Nation office complex.

The juggling act is part of a typical day at the self-proclaimed “biggest little radio station in the northwest” (of Saskatchewan).

If you’re not paying close attention, CFDM may at first sound like any other radio station across the country. But have a closer listen, and it’s obvious CFDM is in a league of its own.

### Aboriginal Communicators

Aboriginal people throughout Canada are establishing vibrant businesses in the communications field. These companies are making their mark in the world of radio, video, advertising, research and writing services, and the new multimedia technologies.



Photo credit: Jeff Campbell

**Babes Derocher** is one of Flying Dust Radio’s most popular DJs.

“The bigger radio stations are in it for the dollar figure,” muses Derocher. “We’re on the air, first of all, to get the word out to our people of what’s happening. It’s about communication.”

The idea for on-reserve radio was hatched three years ago by a Chief and Council looking for innovative ways to reach community members. What began as an act of responsible government quickly developed a personality of its own.

Derocher’s popular afternoon show is the antidote for all that is stale and contrived in radio land. He has a laid-back, down-home style and an obvious enthusiasm and love of radio.

“We try to be as personable as possible,” he says, “talk to people like you’d want to be talked to, make sure people are having a good time listening to a good station....”

Derocher was asked to try out for the job because the station’s manager, **Ben Lachance**, was familiar with some of his previous work as a bingo caller.

So the affable young man known as “Babes,” a nickname his father gave him because he is the youngest of nine children, quit his day job as a conservation officer and strapped on the headphones full-time.

“CFDM...”  
continued on page 2



Indian and Northern  
Affairs Canada

Affaires indiennes  
et du Nord Canada

Canada

**"CFDM..."**

continued from page 1

As assistant manager, Derocher was part of the team that oversaw the station's growth from a satellite of Missinipi Broadcasting Corporation into a local powerhouse.

More and more listeners from outside the community are tuning in each day, and businesses from nearby Meadow Lake are clamouring for advertising space.

As well as music for all age groups, CFDM does live play-by-play for local hockey teams. The station also often goes on location when a new store opens up in town, or at election time.

But no matter where the broadcast is from, the outstanding element in CFDM's success is culture. The station is proud of its First Nations heritage which, in one form or another, is always part of the programming. For example, three hours of airtime a day are solely in Cree. DJs often slip back and forth between English

and Cree, and at least 20 percent of the music is Aboriginal.

Derocher believes radio can help strengthen First Nations culture, and that it is an excellent way to keep Aboriginal languages in everyday use, and help reintroduce them to young people.

"People are very proud that we have a radio station [on Flying Dust]," says Derocher, queuing up the next batch of songs. "As long as I'm here, it'll be here." ✱

## Uqsiq Communications Iqaluit-Based Entrepreneur Branches Out

by Diane Koven

**A** great traveller, **Kirt Eliza Kootoo Ejesiak** has seen and done a lot for someone barely over 30. Now the long and winding road has led him back to Iqaluit where he grew up, to become a very successful young entrepreneur.

His international travels, and his degree in applied science from Acadia University in Nova Scotia, both helped inspire his growing enterprise, Uqsiq Communications.

While working in Spain, Ejesiak met **Rannva Simonsen**, who came from the Faroe Islands in the North Atlantic Ocean. An architect and designer, she became his wife and business partner.

When they returned to Iqaluit in 1996, Ejesiak decided to branch out from the engineering field he had worked in to that point. He had always done part-time work in communications — for both print and television broadcasting — and wanted to devote more time to that field. "There were so few businesses owned by Aboriginal people," he says, "that I wanted to show it could be done, and that we could do things on our own."

Starting his own business, at that time and in that location, was a very

difficult process. "I felt like the loneliest person on the planet," he says, "as there were really no resources when I started. I kind of went on faith..."

At the beginning he had to scramble for business, but he persevered, believing that timing was everything. "I wanted to start my business before Nunavut came into being," he says. "I knew that the landscape of work would change. Up until 1999, we didn't get any government contracts, but with the new government things changed dramatically. Our main client now is the government." In partnership with his wife, Ejesiak serves as the company's president and creative director.

An astute entrepreneur, Ejesiak is always looking to fill the market niche. "We handle printing, publishing, design and are looking at new services on-line," he says. "We are looking at expanding our services to include distance education and Web casting as well." According to Ejesiak, Uqsiq Communications is the only entirely Inuit-owned and -run visual communications and graphic design firm.

In 1999, the Business Development Bank of Canada presented Ejesiak with the Young Entrepreneur Award for Nunavut.



**Kirt Eliza Kootoo Ejesiak** and his wife **Rannva Simonsen** are partners in Uqsiq Communications.

His entrepreneurial spirit runs deep, and his one successful business is just the beginning. He and his wife own a kayaking company that they operate in the summer, offering rentals and tours. They also own part of a telephone answering and office support company, and four beach-side buildings. In addition, they are creating an umbrella company, By the Red Boat, for all their businesses, present and future.

"Everything we have done has always been a challenge," Ejesiak says. "Both my wife and I know that if someone says no, it is rarely final. There is no such thing as a roadblock; we welcome the challenge."

To contact Uqsiq Communications, telephone (867) 979-2055. ✱

# Documentaries Focusing on Relationships

by Raymond Lawrence



To Edmonton-based Aboriginal filmmaker **Ron Scott**, relationships are everything. Through his Prairie Dog Productions, the graduate of Vancouver Film School has been able to look at relationships and give audiences a better understanding of them — whether they are between father and son or mother and daughter, or between cultures.

A full-time husband and father of four children, Scott has taken his love of film and married it to his appreciation for relationships in general. Through film, he is able to share with a wide audience his hunger for a better understanding of how human beings interact. “I’ve always liked films and the idea of filmmaking,” he explains. “I started off in acting but through the whole process of understanding motion pictures, I decided I didn’t want to be an actor. I wanted to be on the other end of the camera, so I went to film school.”

Scott has written, directed and produced films, but prefers writing and directing. “When you come to understand how difficult the whole process is, you become quite non-judgmental and very understanding of the many decisions and background

Ron Scott makes documentaries that look at interpersonal relationships.



situations that led to that film,” he says of watching other people’s work.

Scott has made documentaries that focus on how people interact with family and friends in a whole range of situations. “I’m very aware of dynamics of certain situations,” he says. “It’s something I really enjoy and I think that one of the fundamental situations in society that tends to get overlooked is our relationships and how they affect society.”

“My goals are to actually view and get inside relationships and into motivations for what people do, and move audiences to look at their

own situation....” His “anti-gang” film called *Consequences*, for example, puts across the message that choosing to be part of a gang can have some very negative results.

“My motivations are my audience. I hope that people will look at their own situations to either make changes, or make it better,” Scott affirms. “One of the things that’s very important to me is research and another thing is a lot of listening and understanding.”

Scott’s documentary on fathers and sons has received a lot of positive feedback, often from women who said it gave them a better understanding of the dynamics of their own family lives.

“I think you grow to a deeper understanding and I think you do evolve as a human being,” he says of his 10 years’ experience behind the camera. “I find people are fascinating so I definitely come to a deeper understanding of people in all cultures, and I think that understanding is needed in society today, and I think you can do it by exposing people to it.”

For more information about Prairie Dog Productions, telephone (403) 413-9047. ✨

*Raymond Lawrence is a freelance writer of Ojibway and European ancestry.*

## In this Issue...

CFDM 105.7 FM (Saskatchewan) .....	1
Uqsiq Communications (Nunavut) .....	2
Prairie Dog Productions Ltd. (Alberta) .....	3
Mosquito Point (Ontario) .....	4
Theytus Books Ltd. (B.C.) .....	5
zmacnewmedia.com (Saskatchewan) .....	6
Net Little Palmtop (B.C.) .....	7
Taqramiut Productions Inc. (Quebec) .....	8
Diane Poirier, Poirier Communications Ltd. (Ontario) .....	Portrait



# **Paula du Hamel Mends Entertainment and Communications Skills**

by Heather Sherratt

**P**aula du Hamel's first career was as a professional contemporary dancer. She studied, performed and choreographed with Les Ballets jazz de Montréal and the Sydney Festival Ballet and appeared as a guest dancer with the National Ballet of Canada. As a choreographer, dancer and teacher, she travelled throughout North America, Europe, Africa and Australia. She also toured internationally as a performing arts ambassador, gaining wide experience in organizing events on stages throughout the world, including London, England and Tokyo, Japan.

Then in 1990, du Hamel retired from this highly successful career and enrolled at Carleton University in Ottawa. Her aim was to expand her knowledge and ability to communicate through performance, events, conferences and writing.

Above all, du Hamel wanted to harness her many talents and focus them on educating the general public about contemporary First Nations, and their history and cultures. The outcome of that decision was Mosquito Point — du Hamel's diversified communications firm based in Manotick, Ontario.

In total, du Hamel has completed four degrees, including a Bachelor of Education. With the help of Mosquito Point, she takes cultural education to a wide public, whether through writing, research, presentations, or participating in symposiums and conferences. Her experience on the stages of the world gives her the expertise to present her message through music, dance and song.

She has been part of teams presenting Aboriginal people's cultures at venues like Ottawa's Winterlude, Festival of Spring and Canada Day celebrations. Mosquito Point also handles the design and construction of props, backdrops and sets for shows and special events.

In partnership with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), du Hamel takes part in a school visits program, educating elementary, high-school and post-secondary students about Aboriginal history and cultures.

So far, the program has reached over 36,000 people.

She has also developed some educational children's games for INAC. These "Crunchers" are based on a folding paper game, and feature questions and answers about Aboriginal people and cultures.

Another ongoing project for du Hamel is the research and design of a tourist residence in Panama that will be accessible to people in wheelchairs, or anyone with a mobility problem.

With her diverse expertise, boundless enthusiasm and unique blend of performance and academic skills, du Hamel is making Mosquito Point an excellent instrument for communicating the richness of Aboriginal cultures.

Telephone Mosquito Point at (613) 692-3139. ✨



**Paula du Hamel** travelled the world as a dancer before founding her communications firm.

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**Theytus Books Ltd.**

## Putting Aboriginal Writers Front and Centre

by Ruth McVeigh

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**T**heytus Books is the first totally Aboriginal-owned and -operated publisher in Canada. Its aim is to become a large press based entirely on First Nations writers, publishing books on issues important to Aboriginal people.

The company's reputation has steadily risen with the publication of books by a number of high-profile Aboriginal writers, including **Lee Maracle, Maria Campbell, Jeanette Armstrong, Howard Adams, Drew Hayden Taylor and Beatrice Culleton.**

According to Lee Maracle, "Theytus publishes the finest in fiction, non-fiction, poetry and children's books." They also publish short stories, art books and journals. An anthology titled *Crisp Blue Edges*, edited by **Rasunah Marsden**, features creative non-fiction. Over the past 20 years, the company has published over 90 titles.

Theytus (a Salishian word meaning "preserving for the sake of handing down") Books was founded by **Randy Fred** in Nanaimo in 1980 and incorporated in 1981. In 1982, The En'owkin Centre purchased the publishing company and moved it to Penticton. The Centre, established by the six First Nations that make up the Okanagan Indian Educational Resources Society, offers a comprehensive approach to better education for First Nations people.

With **Greg Young-Ing** as Managing Editor of the company, and **Florene Belmore** in charge of Production and Fulfillment, the company is now owned by the Okanagan Indian Education Resources Society, and is a division of The En'owkin Centre. The Board of Directors of Theytus Books comprises six appointed representatives, one from each of the six Okanagan First Nations. The association with En'owkin has given the



**Florene Belmore and Shirley Louis**  
of Theytus Books.

publishers access to a pool of established writers who come there to teach. Theytus is also able to use the teachers' expertise as rotating Editorial Committee members. This ensures balance, with ongoing members providing consistency and rotating members introducing fresh ideas.

The company wants to ensure that the editorial process complements the unique emerging voice of Aboriginal literature. For that reason, Theytus does not necessarily follow established editorial rules and practices. In terms of the treatment of time, for example, Ojibway Author **Kim Blaeser** describes "the voices of animals and messages given by spirits and natural phenomena ranging from ancient times, to the present, to the future, displaying the Aboriginal concept that all time is closely connected and that actions can transcend time." (*Akwe:kon Journal*, Vol.X, #1, Kim Blaeser)

In 1995, Theytus brought together representatives from 39 Aboriginal publishing operations at the National Aboriginal Publishers Conference, held at Simon Fraser Harbour Centre,

Vancouver. These included publishers from the U.S., Australia and New Zealand. The following year, Theytus hosted the fifth annual "Returning the Gift" Native Writers Festival, which showcases Aboriginal talent and is held at a different venue each year.

In 2000, two Theytus books, *Kou-Skelowh* and *Further Adventures of a Blue Eyed Ojibway*, received BC Millennium Book Awards. *Kou-Skelowh* also received a Children's Choice citation from the Canadian Children's Book Centre.

Theytus receives block funding from the Canada Council, the British Columbia Arts Council and the Department of Canadian Heritage, and has further income from sales revenues and other grants. Theytus Books is an active member of the Association of Book Publishers of British Columbia, the Literary Press Group and the Association of Canadian Publishers.

For more information, telephone Theytus Books at (250) 493-7181. ★

## Business Cards with a Byte

by Michael Fisher

**L**ee McAdam plans to launch the latest multi-media tool in Saskatoon through his new company, zmacnewmedia.com, which oversees the design and manufacturing of CD business cards. His inspiration for this enterprise came when he was traveling abroad and found himself in a back packer's worst nightmare — an innocent person in a foreign jail.

The 22-year-old, from Big River First Nation in Saskatchewan, was teaching English in St. Petersburg, Russia last year. A surreal run-in with the police gave him a new appreciation for his home on the other side of the globe.

"I was walking out of the subway station from work," he recalls, "and the cops grabbed me out of a crowd, took the copies of all my documents I was carrying, handcuffed me...and then threw me in the back of a Lada."

His eight hours in jail, without word of why he was arrested or when he would get out, were the longest of his life. But the experience allowed him to put things into perspective.

"It wasn't until then I realized what opportunities I had here in Canada. I decided if I ever got out, I was coming home and starting my own business."

With no money in his pockets, McAdam walked from the jailhouse to the airline and got to work fulfilling his goal as soon as he arrived home.

A Saskatoon Tribal Council youth program helped him land a job at the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Business Association in February 2000. Although McAdam had little experience, he rapidly climbed to a management position before he left in August to work for himself full-time. Most techno-savvy young people are sharp observers of industry trends, which is how McAdam anticipated his company's cutting-edge product.

He says the term "CD business card" falls far short of describing this dynamic multi-media tool. It's actually a full-capacity CD-ROM about the size of a business card, and playable on a standard computer CD-ROM drive. This means the applications — audio and video, graphics and animation, text and photos — are limited only by the imagination.

"Anybody who has anything to present," McAdam says, "can use the CD business card and the multi-media as a staging point, take old information, put it in a new vehicle, polish it up and it's a new spin."

From experience, he knows most pamphlets and other materials passed out at career symposiums and youth fairs tend to get left in the bus on the way home, or shoved in a locker and forgotten.

"That information, that message, is not making an impact," he says. "It's not being read, touched or heard, so basically it's pointless."

Contrast this with the exciting, fun CD business card, which can store masses of information and is easy to carry.

The card can capture anyone's imagination, McAdam maintains, because it uses sight, sound and motion to communicate its message. He estimates about nine in ten people don't know what he's talking about when he mentions the CD business card, but he relishes getting new converts.

"If I didn't believe in it, I'd run off and join the army," he says. "I believe everybody should utilize this product, not because I'm offering it, but because of what it can do for them."

For more information, telephone (306) 955-8574. ★



## Net Little Palmtop

# Hand-Held Computers Hold Key for B.C. Entrepreneur

by Raymond Lawrence

**Y**oung B.C. entrepreneur **Alex Collins** has a good grip on the expanding hand-held computer market.

Best of all, it's a market that is just beginning to really open up. Collins, 28, says these hand-held computers can do a lot more than serve as glorified address books. The trick is learning how to apply this new technology productively.

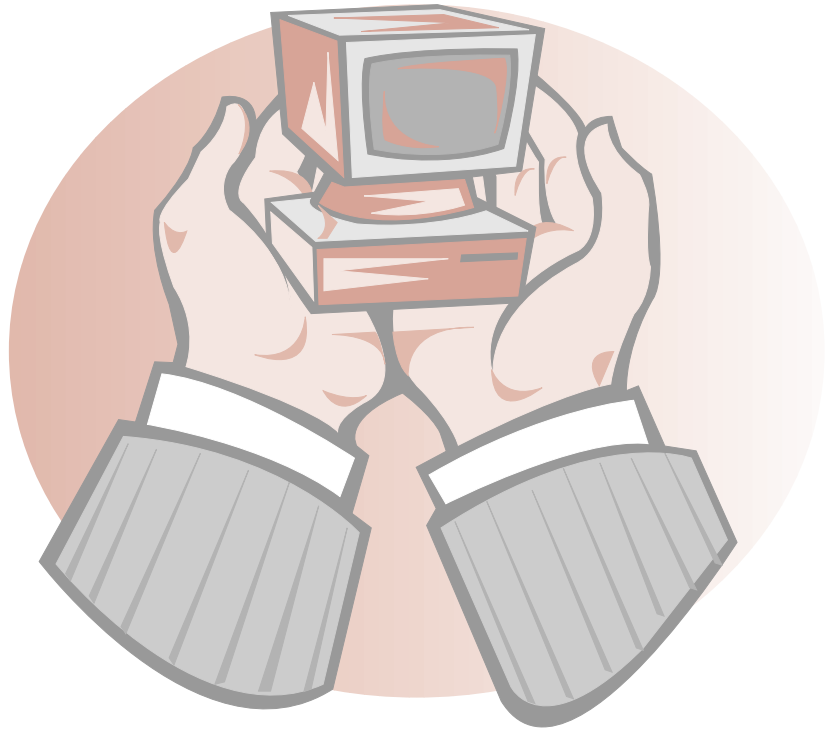
And Collins is there to help.

His business, Net Little Palmtop, sells hand-held computers and sets up databases and systems to maximize his products' use. In the two years since starting up his business, he has worked steadily to develop his client base by providing an unsurpassed expert service.

"I've been involved with hand-held computers for about 10 years now," Collins says. He started out working with a company that sold hand-held computers and batteries, using his degree in computer maintenance to repair the devices for clients. But he discovered that customers kept asking for services that the company wasn't providing.

Customers would hire Collins to set up their hand-held devices to work with their computers, show them how the devices work and back up their data. "I found I was doing a lot of part-time work for myself outside the company and that was more rewarding...."

Unable to convince his then-employer to offer a wider range of services, Collins struck off on his own. To his advantage, he had industry contacts and some regular clients. That was fortunate, he says, "because I didn't have a lot of money when I left...so it was pretty brutal actually... basically starving myself for about a year and a half."



He now has about 1,200 clients who use his services regularly. He is constantly looking for new services to provide, and works hard at keeping his customers up-to-date.

"This is a 360-degree mobile solutions company," he emphasizes. "We sell the hand-held computers, including high-end devices that you won't find in most stores in Canada. But I bring them in because I cater to more business-oriented clients."

In addition to training, Collins provides information management systems so that clients can use their palmtops to manage their time and information better. "A lot of my time is in integrating a hand-held device with the system that works best for a company, and then tying it all together," he adds.

Currently, Collins has a senior programmer on staff and contracts out additional work. He plans on expanding his business to offer project management soon. This will mean

adding three more people to the payroll. "Sometimes I'm working up to 16 hours a day," he says. "I never wanted overnight success, and I believe we have a foundation that is really solid."

For more information, telephone (604) 689-4263. \*

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## Taqramiut Productions Inc.

# Making Inuit Documentaries

by Annabelle Dionne

**T**aqramiut Productions Inc. (TPI) is one of the only entirely Inuit-owned film production houses in Quebec. It is also one of the only companies in the province to produce documentaries on Aboriginal subjects. Founded in 1996, it already has an impressive video library.

TPI is the commercial subsidiary of Taqramiut Nipingat Inc. (TNI), an Inuit community radio and television station that has operated in Nunavik (Northern Quebec) for the past 26 years. Both companies' mission is to promote Inuit culture. TPI, however, puts more emphasis on documentaries for national and international markets.

"To make sure our work has an Aboriginal feel, we train Inuit to write scenarios, do research, operate cameras, edit films and even produce," says **Bernard Beaupré**, one of TPI's founders. "They are the best placed to talk about their history and culture, and I want them to feel as capable of doing the job as non-Aboriginal people." TPI helps give them the tools they need.

"The creation of the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) in 1999 gave us a great running start," Beaupré adds. The firm earns a big percentage of its revenue from films produced specifically for the new channel. The rest comes from corporate productions and other television channels.



**Bernard Beaupré** is one of the founders of Taqramiut Productions Inc.

"In addition to post-synchronization and translation into English, French and various Aboriginal languages, we offer our expertise in northern logistics to production firms from the South, and especially from Europe. We prepare foreign film crews for work in Aboriginal environments, and keep an eye on them during the process," explains Beaupré.

Although his roots are Montagnais, Beaupré has worked in Nunavik for more than 30 years. His knowledge of Inuit culture is extremely useful in planning northern production work. "Film planning requires a good knowledge of Inuit lifestyles," he stresses. For example, entire villages can empty out during the time of the goose and caribou migrations, as well as during walrus and whale hunting. "We always plan for two components in our scenarios, one modern and the other traditional," he notes. "If everyone has gone hunting, we can always go and find them and film them anyway."

TPI employs Aboriginal people both at its administrative centre in Montréal, and in the villages of Nunavik. "We work a lot with people from these regions because TNI has offices in Salluit, Puvirnituk and Kuujjuaq," Beaupré says.

TPI makes an important economic contribution to the Inuit communities. "We spend a huge amount of money on air tickets with Air Inuit and First Air, not to mention hotels, restaurants and guides, and snowmobile or canoe rental. In fact, around 80 percent of our funds are spent in the North, compared with 20 percent in the South."

Taqramiut Productions' goal is to provide Inuit with the training they need to produce films independently themselves on site, and meet the demands of commercial production.

Telephone Taqramiut Productions at (514) 637-8284. ✪







# Portrait

## Fearless Communicator

Diane Poirier  
Ojibway

President and Founder, Poirier Communications Ltd.

by Wendy MacIntyre

*“I went out to visit over 200 communities, First Nations, Inuit and Métis, across the country. I talked to the people at the grassroots, and got their direction...It was tremendous. Based on what people told us, that’s how I developed and put together the advertising division of Poirier Communications.”*

From her base in a two-storey, red-brick building in Ottawa’s East End, Diane Poirier recently celebrated her communications firm’s 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Widely recognized as Canada’s first full-service Aboriginal advertising agency, Poirier Communications Ltd. has provided communications services to more than 30 national Aboriginal organizations and federal government departments and agencies. Poirier’s company is the advertising agency for Aboriginal initiatives for three federal departments: Health Canada, Justice, and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

Poirier Communications pioneered the “Dialogue Circles” — a form of focus testing that respects Aboriginal cultures and traditions. The firm also regularly provides advertising and communications services to the Assembly of First Nations and the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network.

Poirier is proud of the respect her company has built up among Aboriginal communities. “Sure, it’s a business,” she says. “But it’s more than a business. It’s almost a mission I have...I’ve received so much from the community.”

When Poirier started out in the advertising world, she had “no training, no education.” But her superb determination and adventurous spirit drove her on. “I wasn’t afraid. I learn very fast.”

Diane Poirier was born into the Matchequis family, members of the Brunswick House First Nation in Northern Ontario. Like many First Nations children in the 1950s, she was adopted by a non-Aboriginal family. She grew up with her adoptive Francophone parents in Kapuskasing, where she went to school and completed Grade 12.

In her teenage years, she decided to find her roots. “I had a lot of anger,” she says. “I felt I was robbed of some elements of my life.” Her adoptive father, whom she idolized, helped her research her birth family.

For Poirier, finally meeting her grandmother’s brother was “a big discovery.” Elders and family members of her First Nation all helped her with their teaching, encouraging and supporting her. “It brought me a lot of strength,” she affirms. This strength enabled her to deal in a new way with the racism she encountered in Northern Ontario. Instead of arguing, she tried to educate people.

At age 17, Poirier shocked her adoptive parents with her decision to go to the Philippines to visit their son, a missionary priest. She stayed a year in the Philippines, starting university there and making a lot of friends. Then she returned to Northern Ontario.

At age 20, Poirier gave birth to her daughter. As a single mother, she devoted the next three years to giving her child “an environment of security.” She then moved to Ottawa with her daughter and got a clerical position with the National Capital Commission (NCC), the Crown agency that administers the capital’s lands and tourist attractions. Poirier soon saw a need for guided group tours for visitors coming to the capital. Her tours were a big success, but Poirier’s adventurous spirit soon yearned for a new challenge. The NCC then offered her a job managing all visitors services for Winterlude, Ottawa’s winter festival. She worked in this

position for four years, looking after VIPs and promoting Winterlude as a tourist attraction.

In this job, Poirier realized anew just how many non-Aboriginal people were uninformed about First Nations cultures and history. “As I went out and met contacts... I realized, somebody’s got to educate these people. I was doing it on a daily basis, but I thought maybe I should get paid for it.”

She decided to leave her job, and economic security, with the NCC. Her husband was initially concerned about the fact they would have just one income. But after two weeks’ careful thought, she knew what she wanted to do.

“I realized at that point in my life, my best asset was my ability to communicate. I had no problem meeting people...I was not afraid to state my opinions. And I had the organizational skills. I knew I was going to open a business in communications — how exactly, I didn’t know.”

Poirier asked a friend to help out with administration, while she knocked on doors, letting people know about her skills.

She got her first contract from The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP), organizing a gathering of 500 Aboriginal people in Ottawa during the Meech Lake Accord constitutional discussions.

Her duties included arranging for media coverage, accommodation and guest speakers. For a subsequent contract with CAP, she had a much smaller budget, which didn’t cover either hotels or catering for the 1,000 people expected. So she borrowed army tents from the Department of National Defence and set them up on Lebreton Flats, an undeveloped area of Ottawa, close to Parliament Hill. She got enough food donated to give all 1,000 people three meals a day.

Then Poirier started knocking on federal government doors again. She got her first real breakthrough in 1994-95, when Health Canada was looking for an advertising agency strictly for its Aboriginal audience.

Poirier Communications was one of the firms invited to do a presentation to win this prestigious contract. Poirier put together her team of First Nations, Inuit and Métis professionals, and did her presentation before a seven-person jury. A month later, her firm got the contract.

Immediately, she went on the road, travelling to over 200 Aboriginal communities, asking them for direction. “Based on what people told me, that’s how I developed and put together the advertising division of Poirier Communications.”

Her firm put two years’ research into how best to reach communities: “Some communities are so remote — how do you ensure that these people get the message?” She uses “real people” from Aboriginal communities in her posters, television and radio ads. “They become the spokespersons transferring the message,” she emphasizes.

In future, Poirier wants to spend as much time as possible with her daughter and her three-year-old granddaughter, Shenoa, and continue helping young Aboriginal people to enter the communications field. Five years from now, her goal is to transfer her skills to Indigenous people in South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

“I’ve learned over the years with Aboriginal people, you become strong; especially First Nations women, we have strong determination skills. No matter what hurdles lie ahead, we will jump them and reach what we need to reach.”

