Circles of Light

September 2001 – Number 15

Bosgoed Project Consultants Ltd.

Firm's Goal Inspired by Elders

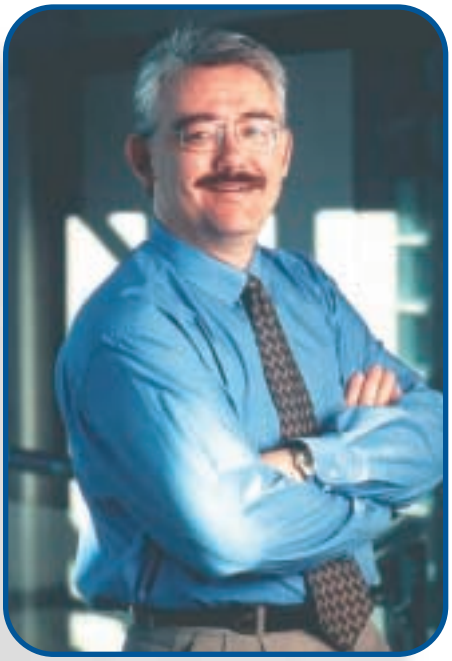
by Raymond Lawrence

When **Gary Bosgoed** left his position as a manager in an engineering firm to start up his own company, the Peepeekisis First Nation member knew it was a risk. But he was counting on the demand in the First Nations community for a First Nations engineering firm.

"There was some trepidation through that period," he admits, "because naturally you wonder if you've made a mistake, or if you're actually going to do this."

His gamble paid off. Today, Bosgoed Project Consultants Ltd. has a head office in Regina, as well as satellite offices in Saskatoon, Fort Qu'Appelle and La Ronge in Saskatchewan; Edmonton and Calgary in Alberta; Vancouver, British Columbia; and Burlington, Ontario.

Early on, Bosgoed realized he would have to be flexible in order to penetrate a highly competitive market dominated by large firms. As a result, his company has been constantly evolving. At first, Bosgoed Project Consultants specialized in engineering and project management. These days, the company is involved in projects from start to finish. It invests in business plans, locates funding sources, plans, designs, provides management consultation services during development, and builds infrastructure projects.



Gary Bosgoed, founder of Bosgoed Project Consultants Ltd., helped launch the Canadian Aboriginal Science and Engineering Association.

Bosgoed Project Consultants has experience in projects ranging from road and bridge construction to offices, schools and hospitals, shopping malls, arenas, apartments and water systems. The company offers a wide range of services, including capital and land use planning, environmental assessments and structural, mechanical and electrical engineering.

"If we need a larger team, the first thing Bosgoed Project Consultants does is find First Nations people for that team," Bosgoed emphasizes. When required, he also has a pool of engineers, architects and planners on whom he can call on a contract basis.

Bosgoed's goal, inspired by the Elders, is to leave the legacy of an engineering firm that involves First Nations people in all aspects of the work, and helps First Nations communities acquire knowledge, skills and a greater sense of ownership over projects they commission.

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Science and Engineering

Aboriginal people in Canada are building businesses founded on their scientific and engineering expertise. From architecture to forestry science, these businesses incorporate Aboriginal values in their services and practice.

Two Row Architect

Blending Traditional and Modern Forms

by Diane Koven

Brian Porter, head of Two Row Architect, gets inspiration from traditional Aboriginal architecture.

Brian Porter is the head of Two Row Architect, the first architectural practice in Canada to be located in a First Nation community. Porter has traveled the world, but both life and his career have brought him full circle to his boyhood home of the Six Nations of the Grand River near Brantford, Ontario.

Porter attended a technical high school in Cayuga, a 45-minute bus ride down the Grand River. "I went the drafting route," he says, "which is probably what got me interested in this field." That field was architecture, and in 1987 he graduated from the University of Toronto with a Bachelor of Architecture degree.

Although he initially found Toronto a culture shock, Porter enjoyed the experience of attending university there. He then did a fourth-year term in Rome, and traveled extensively in Europe and in South America. "Any time I have traveled," he adds, "it has reinforced the fact that I wanted to return to Six Nations."

Following his travels abroad, Porter spent a couple of years working for the federal government, learning "from the inside" about writing proposals, policies and procedures. He then joined a firm that had experience providing architectural services to Aboriginal clients. In 1992, he and that firm's partners established Two Row Architect. Two years later, Porter became Two Row Architect's sole proprietor.

The firm's name derives from "Two-Row Wampum." Wampum were the tubular beads carved from shells that the Iroquois people traditionally wove into patterns. They used wampum as currency, and to record significant events. The historic Two-Row Wampum belt is a well-known example, symbolizing the peace agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and Dutch settlers.

"The name works on many different levels," notes Porter. "It looks good graphically, but more importantly, conveys the spirit of what our office is all about. The sentiment inherent in the Two-Row Wampum is understood by First Nation peoples from Windsor to Montreal."

In keeping with its name, Two Row Architect strives to meld traditional Aboriginal architecture with modern forms. "Since 1987," says Porter, "our struggle from a design standpoint has been trying to find a way to incorporate some of the cultural values and cultural aesthetics that are appropriate, given that we are building contemporary buildings. I get more inspiration out of the longhouse, teepees, igloos, etcetera, than I do from the current trends."

The firm's portfolio includes schools, health centres, community centres and commercial projects, such as restaurants, retail plazas and a golf clubhouse design.

Within its first few years, the firm had established a clientele that was about 80 percent Aboriginal. Two Row Architect has attracted clients from neighbouring non-Aboriginal municipalities as well.

The firm has expanded its services so that Aboriginal communities can participate in their own projects. As Porter explains, "We deliver the vast majority of our projects using construction management techniques. This enables us to have more of the work done by local forces in whatever community we are working in. We are typically able to have anywhere from 40 to 80 percent of the work remain local."

Visit the company Web site at **www.tworow.com** ✷

In this Issue...

Grizzly-Man Resource Management

Goal-Oriented Forestry Consultant Reaches New Summit

by Ruth McVeigh

Lennard Joe, founder and owner of Grizzly-Man Resource Management, is a professional forester who became goal-oriented early in life. He grew up in a hard-working family — the son of Chief **Percy Joe** and grandson of Chief **Anthony Joe** of the Shackan First Nation in British Columbia.

It was while working as a forestry supervisor for Weyerhaueuser, that Joe made up his mind to become a consultant. In the winter of 1999, he started Grizzly-Man Resource Management.

"The name was very special to me because my Indian name is SuxSuxWelsh, which means 'Grizzly-Man' in English," he explains.

His company ended its first year with a profit, exceeding the income Joe had projected in his business plan. That year, he received the Aboriginal Youth Entrepreneur Award from the All Nations Trust Company.

Lennard Joe, founder of Grizzly-Man Resource Management, on Mount Kilimanjaro, which he climbed to raise money and awareness for Alzheimer's disease.

Grizzly-Man Resource Management, which now has four First Nations employees, surveys and evaluates about 100,000 cubic metres of timber each year. While running his business, Joe is also studying for his professional forester's degree.

Joe brings a varied work experience and educational credentials to his enterprise. When he left high school, he tried ranching but says he decided he needed education to escape "being a grunt" for the rest of his life. After a year at the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology in the Natural Resource Technology Program, Joe dropped out to pursue his first love — hockey.

He then attended the University College of the Cariboo in Kamloops so that he could continue playing hockey while studying forestry. His additional two years at Selkirk College were combined with summers working for BC Parks. After graduation, he traveled for a year in the South Pacific, as well as in the southern U.S. and Mexico. On his return, he entered the University of British Columbia forestry program where he became president of the American Indian Science and Engineering Society, an organization that doubled in size while he was there.

Among his many mentors, Joe counts one of the first professional Aboriginal foresters, **Gary Merkel**. Inspired by his role model, Joe applies his own definition of luck — "when preparation and opportunity meet."

Joe currently manages five First Nations-owned wood lots; teaches and assists in courses at the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology in Forestry Management and Small Business Training; and develops timber sale licences for the Nicola Tribal Association (a First Nations joint venture called Peyah Forest Products). He is also starting to develop timber for Nicola Pacific, another joint venture company. Joe is becoming a mentor himself by co-ordinating a project for the Canadian Forest Service and the Nicola Tribal Association, designed to introduce First Nations youth to forest science.

"I consider myself a First Nations forester, not just a forester who happens to be Native," he says of his business. "I involve my people in my decision making and carry a strong attachment to the land."

Apart from forestry, Joe achieved another kind of summit in 2000. He climbed Mount Kilimanjaro in the Himalayas to raise money and awareness for Alzheimer's disease, from which his grandmother suffered. The only First Nation individual in the two teams of 10, he raised almost $5,000.

For more information about Grizzly-Man Resource Management, telephone (250) 315-0097. ✸

Dr. Annelind Wakegijig

Physician Is Role Model in Aboriginal Community

by Diane Koven

An inspirational family doctor, and a childhood interest in science, pointed **Annelind Wakegijig** on the road to an exciting and fulfilling career.

In addition to her practice around Manitoulin Island and vicinity, Wakegijig sits on a Health Canada committee, is a Board member for the Northeastern Ontario Medical Education Corporation, and presents workshops for the North Shore Tribal Council on health issues ranging from menopause to addictions.

She loves to teach, and to share her knowledge and enthusiasm. A role model for Aboriginal youth, she was chosen as the Ontario representative of the National Native Role Model Program in April 2000. Wakegijig has also been featured in *Chatelaine* magazine and in *The Globe and Mail*.

Her father is a traditional Aboriginal healer, and she has always enjoyed studying science, especially biology. "I found the science of how the body works to be fascinating," she says.

Dr. **Annelind Wakegijig** specializes in family medicine.

After finishing elementary school in Wikwemikong on Manitoulin Island, where she is "a proud member of the Wikwemikong Unceded First Nation," she left home at age 13 to attend high school in Sudbury.

"I always thought I would do something in the medical field," she says. "At first, I thought I might become a veterinarian, then a lab technician, but on a trip to Toronto in Grade 11, I toured a hospital and saw the operating room." It was then Wakegijig knew what she wanted as a career.

She stayed in Sudbury, graduating from Laurentian University with a degree in science. At the suggestion of a friend, she applied for medical school at the University of Alberta, which has an Aboriginal Health Care Careers Program. When she was accepted, the next step in her adventure began.

"At first I hated it," she says, "because I was so far from home, but I soon made some good friends." She kept in touch with Dr. **Jack Bailey**, a family physician on Manitoulin Island who inspired and supported her in her career goals. "When I was not able to afford some equipment," Wakegijig says, "he bought me a stethoscope. I still use it. In fact, I had it beaded to remind me where I came from."

Wakegijig graduated from medical school in 1997, then continued her training for two more years, studying to specialize in family medicine.

These days, she is constantly on the move. Based on St. Joseph's Island, east of Sault Ste. Marie, where she lives with her police officer husband, **John**, she travels to Manitoulin Island, Thessalon and Richards Landing. In Sault Ste. Marie, she often fills in for physicians who are on vacation or attending conferences.

"I eventually want to work in a centre which combines traditional medicine and Western medicine," says Wakegijig. "There is such a centre on my own reserve, with a healing lodge in the front of the building and the doctor at the back. Eventually, I would like to be involved in a larger program for public health or Aboriginal women's health, which is very much needed." ✸

"Bosgoed Project Consultants Ltd."

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His firm's management consulting role includes business plans and helping clients get needed project funding and financing. "We still do engineering. But there's no question that getting into the embryotic moment of a project is a good business decision if you want to do the design," Bosgoed says. "It also leaves you opportunities to be the builder and a partner in some developments, and have a whole different level of participation with First Nations."

"In the course of eight years, we've ended up hiring 400 First Nations people either in direct hire or as subcontractors," he adds. In addition, members of his team participate in career fairs and talk to Aboriginal students in inner city schools about careers in engineering. Bosgoed has also created a scholarship fund and helped launch the Canadian Aboriginal Science and Engineering Association — measures that support his personal goal of encouraging First Nations youth to consider the sciences as dynamic career options.

Visit the company Web site at **www.bosgoedprojects.com** ✸

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

DrakeGIS & Mapping Ltd.

Developing Key Tools for First Nations Lands and Forest Management

by Raymond Lawrence

When **Rob Drake** got a job planting trees after finishing high school, it didn't take him long to realize this was not his ideal career.

But he enjoyed forestry work. So for the past 15 years, he has developed his own forestry consulting business, Drake Forestry. His company's forest inventories — a key part of lands management — help calculate things like the total volume of timber available on Crown lands and the growth rate of new forests.

When the forest industry recently took a downturn, Drake turned to Geographic Information Systems (GIS). He formed his Kelowna-based company, First Nations-owned DrakeGIS & Mapping Ltd., to make up his business shortfall. He now has three full-time employees working in GIS and is planning to expand his services. "We took a component of Drake Forestry and, rather than just use it for internal purposes, we decided to market it more aggressively," he says.

Drake explains that GIS is used for everything from municipal planning and engineering to forest management and long-range land planning. For First Nations communities, GIS offers a variety of community planning, engineering, management and inventory tools.

"GIS is useful for saving time and ensuring that planning is done properly," he says, adding that the systems store a tremendous amount of data. "There are many uses for GIS, which takes a lot of data and presents it to the user in a fashion that's useable. GIS is used by just about anyone with any sort of geographic area to manage."

Clients need to know what they want from their GIS, Drake explains. Their identified needs will determine the type of data that goes into the system and how it is organized. Acquiring and organizing data are the most expensive parts of developing a GIS.

"It's not magical. It has to be operated by someone who knows how to operate it," he emphasizes. "The only common thread is that people want accurate answers to complex questions involving geographical data."

As land claims are settled and treaties signed in B.C., Drake believes that demand for GIS and mapping services will increase. "On the DrakeGIS side, our number one clients are First Nations who are looking for traditional use studies and training. Many of them are settling land claims and are going though their treaty processes. If it goes according to the other patterns we've seen, they'll have an area of land that they'll have to manage, and they all want to be able to build capacity in-house to handle their mapping and to handle their forestry work."

DrakeGIS is developing its own capacity to train First Nations in mapping and the technical aspects of forestry practice.

"We'd like to develop into a major training and educational tool for First Nations people and to work hand-in-hand with them," Drake stresses. "We're hoping we can also assist them in managing their forests. We're also really keen on doing traditional use studies for First Nations people."

Visit the company Web site at **www.drakegis.com** ✷

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Ayshkum Engineering Inc.

Dedicated to the Goals of Aboriginal Engineering

by Raymond Lawrence

By many standards, Ayshkum Engineering Inc. is a success. But for this Aboriginally owned and operated firm, based on the Peguis First Nation in Manitoba, success is something always in transition, constantly redefined by the goals the company members set themselves.

Ayshkum's services include complete project management, civil and structural engineering, design, architectural services, feasibility studies, and commercial and residential site development.

"We're constantly looking ahead," says Ayshkum's accounting manager **Toby Laviolette**.

The company was born from discussions among graduates from the University of Manitoba's engineering access program, who felt they could address the need to improve conditions in First Nations communities. The road ahead was not easy. When Ayshkum started out, it was up against companies with long track records of working on First Nations lands.

"There was a time that the company went under in 1997, just because there was no experience as far as this particular office goes, and with no track record it is very hard to get jobs," Laviolette recalls. "There was also a learning curve with INAC (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada) and how they do things, and with the First Nations and what we needed to do to satisfy their needs. It was a hard lesson in '97. But then in '98, things started picking up and word got out that we're not just some fly-by-night company, and that we really can help."

"The First Nations communities that we deal with know that we don't stop until the work is done, but we thrive on that," he says. The team routinely puts in 12- to 15-hour days to ensure jobs meet deadlines, and the client's and their own satisfaction. "When you have a contract to do a job, you give yourself a real tight time-frame just to win the job. But we know we can do it just because we'll pull together and get it done," Laviolette notes.

All too often, he says, companies come into a community with no guarantees on local content. Ayshkum, on the other hand, makes a point of taking a community's resources into account.

"When we tender out to contractors, the First Nation tells us how much equipment they have, how many employees are skilled and how many need to be trained to get a job done," Laviolette explains. "We tell the contractors [this is] the minimum amount of people that you need to train, this is the minimum local content that you need to hire, and the minimum amount of equipment that you need to use from the First Nation. So not only does the contract benefit, the First Nation benefits as well." He adds that one First Nation they worked with started a construction contracting company that is still going.

"I tell people what we do is Aboriginal engineering, and how many people can say that? We do whatever it takes to get the job done, and if we don't have the type of engineer that's required, we'll get one."

Ayshkum Engineering Inc. can be reached at (204) 582-0323. ✸

Dr. Stanley Vollant

Quebec Medical Association's First Aboriginal President

by Annabelle Dionne

On April 21 of this year, Dr. **Stanley Vollant**, a member of the Montagnais community of Betsiamites, was appointed President of the Quebec Medical Association. He is the first Aboriginal person in North America to hold such a position.

Vollant, 36, has been practising medicine at the Centre hospitalier régional de Baie-Comeau — where he is head of the general surgery unit — since 1994. As President of the Quebec Medical Association, he is responsible for upholding the professional values of Quebec's doctors. Representing 6,000 of the 14,000 doctors in the province, the association brings together specialists, general practitioners, medical residents and students. It strives to maintain excellence in medical practice, and promotes important health-related issues.

Photo credit: Annabelle Dionne

Dr. **Stanley Vollant** is head of the general surgery unit at the hospital in Baie-Comeau.

A major concern for Vollant is, of course, the health of First Nations people. "Aboriginal people have specific problems and have a right to specific solutions," he says, adding that he wants to make governments and the general public more aware of First Nations' health requirements. Another issue that greatly concerns him is the need for doctors in isolated regions of the province. "We have to think of increasing these resources as of now," he stresses.

When Vollant talks about his profession, it's clear he is passionate about his work. "The medical profession is a great one," he says, "because it means dedicating ourselves to others. The relationship between the doctor and his or her patient is irreplaceable. People are looking for doctors who listen to them, and who are kind."

Vollant defines good doctors as people who care about their patients, take their role in society seriously, and demonstrate determination and professionalism.

Determination, including the drive to overcome certain fears, played a big part in Vollant's becoming a doctor. For example, he had to master his phobia about the sight of blood, and admits he fainted the first time he saw a dead body. "Since I wanted to become a doctor, I did what was necessary to overcome this problem," he says simply.

Vollant sees life as made up of obstacles we must constantly learn to surmount. "They help you grow," he says. He maintains it was this philosophy that helped him become a surgeon.

Among his role models, Vollant draws inspiration from his grandparents. "They used to canoe down the Betsiamites River for over a month and a half, with children and belongings, in order to reach their hunting and fishing grounds. They also had obstacles to overcome: they had to portage, to get over falls and to fight for their survival. If they hadn't overcome those obstacles, I would not be here today."

Vollant's outstanding success in the medical field, and his groundbreaking appointment as President of the Quebec Medical Association, owe much to his own hard work, and his ability to seize the opportunities life offers, transforming obstacles into strength of character. ✸

Eel River Bar First Nation

Aboriginal Heritage Gardens Showcase Healing Plants

by Raymond Lawrence

Driven by its self-government aspirations and the need for meaningful employment in the community, Eel River Bar First Nation carefully examined what it had to offer, and where its best potential markets were. Then it set to work.

In the mid-1990s, the northern New Brunswick First Nation began negotiating a deal to purchase about 45 hectares of land adjacent to the reserve. Then it connected with the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., which has a small garden of Aboriginal medicinal plants. Both these moves were critical to the $9.3-million project that will see the First Nation open its own Aboriginal Heritage Gardens next year.

"The plants being showcased come from the land here itself and were used in many different ways to heal," explains project co-ordinator **Gilles Soucy**. "Once we're finished, this will be a world-calibre project." Soucy adds that the public's dramatically increased interest in natural medicines means there is a ready market, and that the project's timing is right.

Some 270 species of medicinal plants have been identified for the Gardens. In addition, visitors will see clusters of non-medicinal plants commemorating family groups from the First Nation. To date, there are eight of these commemorative clusters, comprising about 700 non-medicinal plants.

Visitors will also be able to use about three kilometres of trails and board walks accessible from the Gardens' main building, which will have an auditorium, souvenir shop and exhibits. The First Nation anticipates the Gardens will attract two different groups: tourists and scientific researchers. Under Mi'kmaq Elders' guidance, scientists will be able to carry out research in a special facility on the site.

Photo credit: Courtesy of the Eel River Bar First Nation

As well as medicinal plants, the Aboriginal Heritage Gardens will feature clusters of non-medicinal plants commemorating family groups from the Eel River Bar First Nation.

Once the Gardens open, they will employ at least 35 people during operating hours. In preparation for the opening, nearly half of these employees have received intensive training over the past four years.

Within minutes of the Gardens, visitors can find numerous local attractions, including a 2.5-kilometre sandbar and beach, campgrounds and a museum. To serve these visitors, Eel River Bar will open the Osprey Truck Stop on Highway 11. This will offer tourists a large restaurant, full-service gas bar and travellers' facilities. The truck stop is expected to employ as many as 300 people full- and part-time.

The highway, part of the Trans-Canada, sees about 400,000 summer travellers a year, as well as hundreds of transports each day. The First Nation believes the truck stop will help it tap into another market as well — the 800,000 people who visit the Gaspé Peninsula each year. Eel River Bar is little more than an hour from the main route leading to the Peninsula.

The First Nation's third project is the development of Heron Island. Home to about 200 species of migratory birds, the island is also abundant in plant and animal life. The community has identified approximately 60 potential campsites, and is investing in developing trails and gazebos. To transport people to the island, the First Nation is purchasing the kind of high-performance boat that is often used for whale watching on the St. Lawrence. The vessel will link the First Nation — and visitors — to Bonaventure and Carleton on Quebec's Gaspé Peninsula. It will also run from Campbellton as far east as Caraquet (Acadian Village) in New Brunswick.

For more information, telephone (506) 684-6277. ✸

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada

Portrait

"Sharing the Wonders of Science"

Lee Wilson, B.Sc. Ph.D.

Métis

Scientist, National Research Council of Canada

by Fred Favel

"If you take a look at your ancestors, they were intrinsically scientists in their own right, because of the things that they could do; how they could adapt to their environment and make tools and shelter. The skills of the hunter...the powers of observation, the patience, all of the traits which today you could make a list of what a good scientist would be...they had that, but they just used it in a different way. So they were scientists, they were engineers, and they did amazing things with the tools that they had!"

Dr. Lee Wilson uses these words to introduce young Aboriginal people to science, to show "the wonderment and excitement and all the possibilities that exist," as well as to encourage and motivate students to enter a science program. With a Ph.D. in chemistry, a fellowship at the prestigious National Research Council of Canada, and many honours and awards, Wilson is a vibrant and passionate advocate when it comes to telling Aboriginal students that achievements in chemistry, physics, biology and other scientific disciplines are within their reach.

Wilson comes from Lake Francis, a small community 65 kilometres northwest of Winnipeg, at the southern tip of Lake Manitoba. His family is Métis, and he is of Cree, Ojibway, French and English descent. Growing up in a largely non-Aboriginal community with only a few Métis families, Wilson had to deal with the usual prejudices. In his characteristic understated fashion, he shrugs it off as, "I guess you get over it and you just carry on."

His parents separated when he was five years old. Wilson and his younger brother stayed with his mother who commuted back and forth to Winnipeg to work in a packing plant. Their home environment was basic, with an outside pump for their water needs, a wood stove and an outhouse.

His grandmother was a strong influence in his young years, and in the absence of his father, stepped in to help Wilson learn to hunt. "There was no one really around to take me by the hand and show things to me, but my grandmother was pretty smart, and she was kind of a crack shot herself, so she taught me how to snare rabbits at first, and she told me, 'You can have a gun but you won't get it until you learn how to set snares properly.' I think she was basically teaching me patience and how to be thoughtful."

During his high-school years, Wilson won trophies for the 3,000- and 5,000-metre races. He says cross-country running gives him a sense of freedom that is "hard to get otherwise." He was also the centre on the high-school basketball team — all while maintaining an academic average of over 80 percent, and working part-time to save money for his future. "I can't say that we lived in a cycle of poverty," he recalls, "but I definitely wanted to try my best at whatever it was that I was going to do, and I thought that university was the first step towards that."

In Grade 12, Wilson began to think about chemistry as a career, inspired by his chemistry teacher whom he regarded as a role model. He decided to enter a four-year Bachelor of Science program at the University of Manitoba where he discovered that he enjoyed research. Once again, Wilson was fortunate to connect with a supportive individual, Dr. Alaa Abd-El-Aziz, his undergraduate supervisor. He encouraged Wilson to continue on to a Master's degree. Wilson was in the Master's program only briefly. His aptitude for research, and a successful upgrading exam, put him into a Ph.D. program after just one year.

His years working towards a Ph.D. brought Wilson many awards, including the University of Saskatchewan Taube Medal for excellence in research, the University of Saskatchewan Graduate Thesis Award for the best thesis, and upon graduation, the Governor General's Gold Medal in Chemistry, which is awarded provincially. "It feels very strange after being a graduate student for so many years," he says of receiving his doctorate in 1999, "and all of a sudden you've got this title in front of your name. It's a hard thing to accept."

Many people think of researchers as totally preoccupied with their own world, working away anonymously in a laboratory with few outside contacts. Wilson is undoubtedly a promising scientist with many accomplishments to his credit. But his world is much larger than the laboratory, and he speaks enthusiastically about being a teacher and a role model. In 1996, he organized and worked with young Aboriginal students at the Indigenous Summer Science Camp at the University of Saskatchewan. He describes the camp's goal: "to share the excitement and show people that science can be a complicated thing if you look at it superficially, but when you look at it closely in its basic form, it's something you can do just like anyone else."

Wilson finds he can communicate well with young people, perhaps because of his own youth and his ability to relate to their backgrounds. He has spoken at national conferences to bring the world of science to youth. These include the *Balancing Choices: Opportunities in Science and Technology for Aboriginal People* conference in Winnipeg in 1999, at the invitation of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, and the Second National Métis Youth Conference, where he spoke about "role models in the homeland."

Photo credits: Laurel Lemchuk-Favel

Not one to display any obvious trappings of success, Wilson rides a bicycle to work and dresses casually in the lab. His title has not changed his outlook on life. "I understand what it is and what it is worth. It's just a title, really that's all it is. It doesn't change you as a person. It's a long ladder to climb, and you can climb it as long as you want and you may never ever reach the top. Because there's always someone better than you and if there isn't, there is someone who is wanting to be better than you!"

Fred Favel is an Aboriginal writer and communications consultant.

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