

# SOAR

Issue 8, Spring 2007

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# SOAR Magazine

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**WELCOME >** In this issue you will meet BDC Aboriginal Banking's first summer student, Karen Maracle-Sherman. Karen is a brave young woman who overcame a serious health problem and wouldn't let her condition interfere with her life or education.

Learn more about our summer and internship program and this inspirational young woman.

You'll also meet three young entrepreneurs who are sharing some of their struggles and successes in building careers for themselves. The three chose different career paths including video and broadcast production, certified dog trainer and multi-media designer. Each is very good at what he/she does, all are successful and enjoy coming to work everyday. See why a good attitude, education and life choices are the measure of success for these young Aboriginal role models.

This issue also features an Ojibwa from Manitoulin Island with an interesting entrepreneurial family background. Learn why Kevin Eshkawkogan strongly believes in developing economies for First Nations and is working towards this end.

I hope you enjoy reading about these extraordinary young people who are making a difference in their own lives and who serve as role models for other young Aboriginal people. **Enjoy!**

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Planning one's future is very exciting. Some plans can get waylaid or interrupted completely by life's little mysteries. It is in these moments that you learn the most about yourself and your place in the world.

Trust your experiences and you will always have the ability to make the right decisions at the right time. It is best to remember that life is a journey, not a destination.

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## **JESSE GREEN**

JESSE GREEN IS PRESIDENT of StrongFront A/V Productions Inc., a video and broadcast production facility. This year, with the help of BDC, the company has expanded into the sound recording, record label and distribution business. A new office in Winnipeg's market area has helped his company to gain a new and larger client base as well as bringing up its profile in the industry.

Jesse has been busy making strategic alliances to meet the demands of his company's growing client base that now reaches across Canada. His long term goal is to make StrongFront one of Canada's premier Aboriginal audio-visual companies servicing the broadcast and business community nation-wide. He hopes it will eventually be one of North America's prime contacts for production in Canada.

Jesse Green is an Anishinabe from the beautiful community of Shoal Lake, Ontario who grew up in Winnipeg, Vancouver and San Francisco.

Although he wishes he had more of a connection to the reserve life he missed, he has no regrets. He had a normal Aboriginal upbringing coming from hard times but persevering with the wise words of mom and dad. "While people think I am a successful business man, I feel I am still growing and have a long way to go before I reach what I consider to be success," said Jesse. "I believe once you reach your current goals you need to create new goals – so the work is never done."

The son of bluesman Billy Joe Green, Jesse credits his talent and creativity to his father, a multi-nominated and award-winning musician. "My whole life I remember hearing guitar playing and music in the house," says Jesse. "I played my dad's guitars until I was 12 when he bought me my own amp and guitar, and the rest is history." He credits his brains from his mother Ann Green, originally from Sioux Valley, Manitoba. "My mom's side of the family is full of scholars and university graduates, so I think my business savvy came from that side."

Jesse Green started out as a musician in the early 90's playing in an Aboriginal rock band called Peacemaker. "We were innovators at the time," he says. "In 1992, we came out with the first CD put out by any Aboriginal band in Manitoba or in Canada." After eight years of entertaining across Canada and the United States, Jesse reverted back to his high school pursuit of video production. "It was an easy transition," he remembers. "I knew the whole entertainment industry inside out. Through my music career I knew all the TV producers and radio stations across Canada and had a good rapport with them so it was easy to get my foot in the door." Thus began Jesse's career back into the world of video and broadcast. After many production gigs, internships and tours of duty in the budding Aboriginal broadcast world, Jesse took a one year business course and officially launched StrongFront A/V Productions in 2001.

Jesse hopes to triple his capacity this year and expand with two full-time employees and numerous subcontractors. He is very optimistic about the future.

Jesse still plays guitar and sings in a hard rock band called X-Status. He feels he must play and compose music to keep a balance in the crazy world of the music business. His sister, Rikki-Lee Green, plays bass in the band. X-Status was nominated for an Aboriginal Peoples Choice Award for Best Rock CD and won an award for Album Cover Design. 🎨

For more information on Strongfront A/V Productions, visit [www.strongfront.tv](http://www.strongfront.tv).







# FULL CIRCLE dancing for life



Kevin J. P. Eshkawkogan is an Ojibwa from M'Chigeeng First Nation Band on Manitoulin Island. The majority of his immediate family is from M'Chigeeng, Wikwemikong and Aundeck Omni Kaning.


**Early in his life Kevin** was taught to be resourceful and self-reliant. "My father owns and operates a forestry company and that side of my family is very entrepreneurial," says Kevin. At a young age, his mother and stepfather moved the family off-reserve to find year-round work, eventually settling in Chapleau, Ontario. "My parents have always taught me to work hard and my work ethic is something I take pride in," said Kevin. "I had my first job when I was 13 and by the time I was 16, I was working three small jobs at the same time." In Kevin's family it was understood that when he wasn't working he should be in school. Kevin has also been influenced by people he holds as role models like Chief Clarence Louie of the Osoyoos Indian Band who has been quoted saying "Our Ancestors worked for a living, and so should you." This is also what Kevin's parents often said to him while he was growing up.

For the last four years Kevin has been employed with the Waubetek Business Development Corporation. He was recently assigned to manage their tourism subsidiary company, the Great Spirit Circle Trail (GSCT) where he helped develop business in European markets. Following this

career path, Kevin is confident he will be able to continue to help his people become more of a player in the tourism industry. "I strongly believe in developing economies in First Nations to move our communities towards self-sufficiency and this is my way of helping here at home."

Education has been a key element in Kevin's success in life. To date he has achieved a variety of certificates including a business accounting diploma from Canadore College in North Bay, Ontario and a certified economic developer accreditation from the University of Waterloo/Economic Developer's Association of Canada. He is currently enrolled in Ontario's Certified General Accountants Program.

Kevin credits his alcohol and drug-free lifestyle with helping him to keep his focus on education and his goal to help as many First Nations as possible become self-sufficient through economic development initiatives. In the past year Kevin has started dancing, a move that has put him more in touch with his culture. "I have never felt so good about doing something," he said. "My mind is completely free of thoughts about committees, deadlines or contracts while I'm dancing. It's just me and the sound of the drum. There's nothing like it."

Kevin has many inspirations and motivations in his life. His biggest motivation is the pending birth of his first child in December with his partner, Melissa. He is kept grounded by the lessons taught by his family, especially by his parents, to be a good person. "For the future I plan on completing my educational goals and one day opening a business of my own," says Kevin. "I also plan on having a strong healthy family, dancing as often as possible and helping First Nations become healthy economic centres." 

**"MY MIND IS COMPLETELY FREE OF THOUGHTS ABOUT COMMITTEES, DEADLINES OR CONTRACTS WHILE I'M DANCING. IT'S JUST ME AND THE SOUND OF THE DRUM. THERE'S NOTHING LIKE IT."**

by Chantelle Eustache, BDC Kelowna Intern

If your dog requires agility training, please contact Monique Lamoureux at [www.therufflife.ca](http://www.therufflife.ca) or 250 550-4896.

# DOG DAYS

"I want to make a difference in the lives of people and the dogs they own. Having a dog should be a joy and inspiration, but like anything else worth having, it takes time and effort."

**Monique Lamoureux had a rough start** in life but now her days are going to the dogs and she's very excited about it.

Originally from Vernon, British Columbia and a proud descendant of the Cree and French nations, Monique was given the name Apschimosus (Aps-chi-mo-sus) or Little Deer, by her step parent, a medicine man named Lonewalker. She is the middle child of five in a large and diverse family, and has drawn on her own inner strength to transform her life into something most people only dream of.


At the age of fifteen she found herself out in the world making her own destiny. In her young life she was always moving and juggling between three sets of parents. She grew up fast, creating her own stability when she moved out on her own. Balancing school and part-time jobs was difficult. Monique left school and supported herself by working and waiting tables in restaurants and pubs, but life was not satisfying. Knowing education was important, she completed her General Education Development program (GED) from Okanagan College and began searching for a more rewarding direction in life. A newspaper advertisement for "Ben Kersen & the Wonderdogs Professional Dog Trainers Program" captured her interest and presented a new career option.

With a new career path clearly in sight, Monique first tried freelance dog training, but knew she was ready for a greater

challenge. After further research she contacted the Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) of North Okanagan and with their help began working on a business plan. At the same time she took part in the Aboriginal Business and Entrepreneurship Skill Training Program.

It took four months to complete her business plan, but Monique's success proved it was worth the effort. By July 1, 2006, she had her own business as a certified dog trainer offering obedience training, behaviour modification, dog walking/hiking and puppy consultation. She also specializes in canine aggressive behaviour management. Business is so good that Monique is now booking up to two weeks in advance often working twelve hours per day doing what she loves.

In her spare time Monique volunteers for the SPCA and says old dogs can learn new tricks. She also spends lots of time with her best friend Kona, a one year old Border collie. "I want to make a difference in the lives of people and the dogs they own," she says. "Having a dog should be a joy and inspiration, but like anything else worth having, it takes time and effort."

In the future, Monique hopes to further her education in dog agility training, expand her business and own more dogs. She has learned a lot from her trial of fire and says "You have to have faith in yourself. If you look for faith from others you will only disappoint yourself." 



Photography by Courtney and David Wallden from C & D Images, Coldstream, British Columbia



# Always Better

**He failed art.** According to the buzz nobody failed art. You take art when you want to draw cool stuff, listen to loud music and hang with the bangers at the back of the class. But Matt was actually interested! He took Art to hone his skills as an illustrator, to learn a little about proportion and perspective, and even more about shadows and shading. Unfortunately, the buzz got it wrong that year. Art turned out to be all about Monet and Rembrandt and some other dead guys. No one listened to metal music and no one learned how to draw. So Matt failed Art along with the bangers at the back of the class.

A couple of other subjects caught his attention during high school. One such subject introduced him to photography, silk screening, and typesetting. And the other encouraged him to develop his writing skills. Graphic Arts and Creative Writing were both challenging and a better creative outlet for him than the disappointing Art class. Instructors and classmates encouraged him to pursue both passions after graduation.

A fortunate few know exactly what they're going to do and be when they grow up, but Matt wasn't one of them. His brief appearance at the University of Manitoba netted few results. He kept coming back to writing and commercial art.

A practical ten month course in Graphic Design taught him theory and relevant software. This was his niche. And he knew it. Matt's employer contacted the school and arranged for him to work full-time and still receive his certificate before he even completed the required co-op program. Vision Color was a service bureau offering scanning, retouching, and page assembly. It was a great place to get his feet wet in the industry because he worked on a variety of projects. And he was always learning.

Matt's next move brought him to a magazine publishing house as a senior designer and creative lead for an 80-page publication

called Connections. There he developed his skill in editorial design and began doing more freelancing on the side. A couple of years later, Matt joined the team at Embassy Graphics as a prepress/imaging operator.

He flexed his creative muscle and developed a number of marketing pieces for the company. Management recognized his design ability and clients requested to have him work on specific projects. It was all beyond his comfort zone. But he loved it. And continued to learn and grow. Matt began offering his writing and design expertise to solve a number of marketing problems for his expanding freelance client base. This was his dream and he knew he wanted to begin his own company one day.

Two sons, one daughter and five years of marriage later, Matt's dream of starting his own company was still very much alive. His dream became reality a couple of years later, though it seemed disguised to him and looked more like a setback. A memo circulated throughout the departments saying that the company would no longer be pursuing design work. To Matt, the door seemed to be closing. His freelance business had also taken a different turn.

But after a real heart to heart with his wife and talks with friends and family, he decided to take the plunge. McClay Design was born almost four years ago.

Matt's commute takes him past the kitchen with a fresh cup of flavored coffee and down a dozen stairs to his office. That elusive work/life balance is a priority and taking time out to be with his family is a must.

**"QUESTIONS ARE KEY. CLIENTS DON'T REALIZE IT BUT THEY HAVE THE ANSWERS. I JUST HELP DISCOVER THEM."**

**They clicked...** Matt met his wife — on the Internet. Though now it's a more common place to meet others on the Internet, eight years ago it was anything but the norm. The story Matt retells with a certain humor is that first trip he took to meet her. The arrangement had Matt flying to Hamilton, Ontario where her dad met him at the airport. From there they traveled across the border to New York. A seven hour trip in a half ton pickup with a complete stranger — a six foot ex-Marine who had done two tours in Vietnam was more than a little intimidating. Matt discovered later that the trip is normally about five hours but the girl's father wanted some (extra) time to get to know him, talk man to man (i.e., grill him), and put the fear of God into him. "That's just what he did."



**Editor's Note:** For the past couple of years, our team has been working with Matt on our Aboriginal Banking Newsletter which speaks about economic development with regard to Aboriginal peoples, our products and services and our clients. His company is also behind SOAR. His talent, humour and patience are three of the traits I admire most in Matt. I often threaten him, not to get too big because we wouldn't want to lose him — just kidding Matt; you can always hire someone to work for your new clients!

"The kids (Braeden, Zach and Merry) know when I'm at work and they're good."

When his clients sit down with him, Matt asks a lot of questions about who they are and what they envision for their business. "Questions are key. Clients don't realize it but they have the answers. I just help discover them," he says. And his strategy to reach a client's vision often moves beyond what is expected.

After just a few minutes with him, you realize that he brings a desire for excellence to every project, large or small.

Matt has gone from prepress operator to designer/writer to one who educates and encourages his clients towards excellence in business. This is his passion. His family and God are his life. But they all affect each other and intertwine to make him the designer he is. Always better. ♦



by **Karen Maracle-Sherman**

# Maracle's Miracle

facing life and illness head on

**In 1997, during my summer break** from school, I was hired as an intern at BDC Aboriginal Banking, located in Winnipeg, Manitoba. My plan was to attend the University of Winnipeg that fall. I didn't actually end up going back to university until a few years later, in 1999, when I enrolled in some Bachelor of Arts courses. My future was unclear at that time so in 2000, I decided to enroll in the travel program offered by Success Compu-College.

I have had a brain tumor since I was in high school but never let it get in the way of completing schooling because education was always very important to me. During my year at Success I had to have emergency brain surgery. Everyone told me I could drop out and go back to complete my schooling the next fall but I recovered quickly and decided to catch up to the rest of the class. I successfully completed my year with the rest of my class.

In September, 2001, I was hired by a small travel agency as a travel agent. Four days later, the dreaded September 11th happened and I thought to myself, I chose the wrong profession. I stayed with the travel agency for nine months, but since terrorism had changed our world, business was very slow.

In October, 2002, I was hired by my current employer, HRG North America (formerly BTI Canada), as a travel consultant.

I had brain surgery again in 2003. I loved my work at HRG but I took six months off to recover and now I work part-time. I am very happy to be here.

When I was approached by Dianna Hudson from BDC to write an article for SOAR, I had time to reflect on my internship and felt proud of my work. I experienced all around good feelings as BDC was a great place to work. I learned a lot and knew the office environment was right for me. Working at BDC helped me choose my schooling and work path. I definitely would recommend an internship for anyone who is attending university or college. The people I worked with were all really nice. In the end, I decided to take a different career path but I strongly believe that working at BDC helped me adjust to an office environment and the working world. I have great customer service skills and have been complimented on that fact by my previous employers.

I was very young when I did my internship but I really believe working in that learning environment provided me with important job skills and a great work ethic.

I am now pleased to report that in September I went for an annual checkup and they found out my brain tumor is completely gone! ♦

**Editor's Note:** In 1996, Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) established an Aboriginal Banking department to provide leadership in raising its profile and level of activity in the Aboriginal market. The recommendations contained in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report, the MacKay Task Force on Financial Services Sector Reform and the Aboriginal Financing Task Force on Access to Capital is used as key market research in developing initiatives, products and services targeting the Aboriginal market. BDC has an active Aboriginal market presence and our portfolio continues to grow.

Youth plays a major role for BDC in the future, both from an employment perspective and as future clients. To enhance our services, BDC has an annual employment program for Aboriginal youth providing them with summer employment and internship experience while attending college or university. Our budget provides part-time employment opportunities for 20 Aboriginal youth each year.

I am pleased to introduce you to our very first Aboriginal summer student who worked in Winnipeg at our Aboriginal Banking department. Karen Maracle-Sherman is a role model and is very happy to share her story with you.