

# News

## Efforts to empower women earn Indspire award for Elder Mae Louise Campbell

February 16, 2016



Elder Mae Louise Campbell carries the gift of women's medicine. All her life, she has shared her knowledge of Indigenous culture and traditional teachings to help empower the women around her.

And while Campbell (shown above, at left) is a familiar face at Red River College – where she's served as a mentor for more than a decade – it's her work with women in the larger community that led to her being honoured over the weekend with an [Indspire Award](#) in the category of Culture.

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"The thing that I look forward to the most and say, 'Well, this Grandmother got this because of all the work she's doing to help me. The message to me is more important than anything else."

Campbell's desire to see Indigenous women on their personal journey of self-awareness, healing and empowerment. For Indigenous people, Campbell says she still struggles to accept the difficulties of being a young woman in a relationship set her on the path of discovery.

"I knew that I had to find my voice and be confident and the wisdom to be well in my mind, body and spirit, and to continue to grow," says Campbell. "And I knew I would have to do that by discovering our traditional ways of women's knowing, and understanding women's roles in the community."

After attending her first sweat lodge, Campbell felt like she'd finally come home, sensing a connection to the earth mother and embracing all the cultural teachings of her ancestors. She now shares what she learned in her role as **Elder in Residence** at RRC, where she offers support, programming and lessons in traditional teachings to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

Campbell believes all people can benefit from a better understanding of the history and culture of Indigenous people, and that in order to provide the best service across all disciplines, it's crucial to explore traditional methods of conflict resolution, child care and holistic approaches to wellness.

Though she's encouraged by renewed interest in Aboriginal culture – and by new dialogues sparked by the **Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada** and the recent signing of Manitoba's **Indigenous Education Blueprint** – she knows there is still work to be done.

And as always, she's well positioned to help. Last year, Campbell was appointed to the City of Winnipeg's new **Mayor's Indigenous Advisory Circle**. Reflecting on the role, she says she's excited the input of elders is so valued, and aspires to educate city employees the same way she has students and other members of the community.

Formerly the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards, the Indspire gala honours 14 nominees each year, in part to promote self-esteem and pride in Indigenous communities. (In a way, this year's ceremony in Vancouver is a continuation of the work she's doing here.)

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circle: During the inaugural awards in 1999, she was in a gallery she owned. Now, 23 years later, she is still there.

“The awards have brought to life the reality of what many very strong, powerful, talented, and accomplished women in Canada,” says Campbell. “Now it’s time to tell our story. Canadians and people all over the world are recognizing that talented people, we are gifted people – and that to all of our people who still feel the effects of colonization.”

“It’s time to break those stories of pain, and to help our people. It’s time to move above that, and I think the Indspire Awards help that to happen.”

This year’s awards ceremony will air at a later date on Global and APTN. Campbell’s weekly [Women’s Medicine Wheel Teachings](#) run until mid-April at RRC’s Notre Dame Campus, and are open to all.

– Profile by Kristin Marand (*Creative Communications, 2004*)

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