

THE TRAIL TRIBUNE

The Glow of the Harebell, 2024

Artwork by Laiba & Ayah



This piece features the Harebell, a flower that can be found growing all over Alberta. The Harebell is illuminated from its centre, shining down like a lamp onto the ground below. Also included is a nighthawk facing North, representing not only the spirit of our school, but also the history of the land and the Blackfoot people who used the North Trail. The sun shines over the whole sculpture, bringing light to The Trail and its history.

THE OPENING CEREMONY EDITION

Edited by Eni A and Mavie M | Designed and Created by Kylie D and Yvonne Q

THE STORY OF THE NORTH TRAIL

Written by Sanaa

We all know the term North Trail as the name of our beautiful school. However, there is so much more history behind this name, For 10,000 years, the Indigenous people of North America used the North Trail (from the Yukon Territory in Canada to New Mexico), first on foot, then with dogs pulling cargo-laden travois, and finally with horses. Many have walked 3,200 kilometres, from the prairie lands of the far north, all the way to the south and back home again. This was not a small task. In fact, for some, it took at least four years to walk across this historical path. According to Eldon Yellowhorn, an archaeologist of the Piikani Nation, travellers would follow physical landmarks. This includes the Swan's Bill just north of Banff, and Chief Mountain in Northern Montana, along the east side of the "Backbone of the World," which we now call the Rocky Mountains. Some of these individuals were on a spiritual journey when traveling on the North Trail. Others just wished to see the beauty of the country, rivers and forests. Most travellers were traders, lugging heavy sacks of goods in hopes to find success in their journey. Travellers would cross long and tiring paths. These travellers used celestial objects such as the sun and the stars to chart their paths. Along with this, travellers must be able to communicate in various ways. Surely they would come across someone who spoke a different tongue. It took determination and resilience to cross this path of such difficulty and breathtaking beauty. Regardless of this, the Trails of Turtle Island have linked different minority groups. Some travellers lived under a king or queen, while others were nomads. Some travellers spoke a different language, making communication difficult. Each individual was subjected to their own systems of life. Each individual was different. Despite, the North Trail inspires others to embrace their differences. It has taught us the importance and beauty of diversity. Along with this, it has taught us the significance of the land. According to Elder Miiksika'am, the North Trail is also said to have many medicinal properties and holds great sacred value to the Blackfoot people and those who make their homes on Treaty 7 land. The Trail has taught us to respect the guidance of those before us, and the Indigenous practices that correlate with the North Trail. Much of the North Trail is now covered in grass or concrete, however, trade routes like this were once intertwined across the continent. It is our responsibility to respect the land we learn, live and grow on, and to acknowledge the Indigenous practices of those who came before us.

Understanding and Honouring The Importance of Our Land – *with Elder Miiksika'am*

Interviewed by Wilson W and Elisa H

Written by Elisa H. Edited by Irelan M

At North Trail High School, we had the privilege of interviewing a remarkable individual, Elder Miiksika'am, who generously shared his life stories, wisdom and knowledge with the students and staff at North Trail High School. His presence brought a glimpse of a world full of rich cultural heritage and profound teachings that The Trail Tribune is eager to share with our school community.

Elder Miiksika'am begins recounting his journey at the age of six years old, from his time at Old Sun Indian Residential School in Siksika. Later, he excelled in sports at Crescent Heights High School in Calgary before serving as a soldier in international peacekeeping efforts for five and a half years. Following his military service, he worked as a janitor at his former residential school, pursued further studies, and briefly considered setting up a radio station before transitioning to a career as chief of police for the federal government. He then established his own police force for the Siksika Nation. Additionally, he assisted the Glenbow Museum in repatriating sacred items to the Blackfoot people. Elder Miiksika'am concluded by sharing his spiritual journey, emphasising the importance of oral teachings and to spread truthful and positive connections within a community. Over time Elder Miiksika'am was invited to collaborate with and guide the Board of Trustees in the CBE in a journey marked by the advocacy of many other Indigenous individuals to preserve cultural heritage and fostering inclusivity around the community. Elder Miiksika'am emphasised the importance of having a deep understanding of community dynamics, so that diverse voices can be amplified. Including those of Indigenous peoples like the Bloods, Tsuut'ina, Dakotas, and Siksika. Over time Elder Miiksika'am's extensive engagement with educational institutions like Bow Valley College, Glen Bow, and the CBE, Elder Miiksika'am played a pivotal role in shaping spaces for knowledge-sharing and cultural awareness. His journey, which began with military service and led to a passionate advocacy for Indigenous history and education, serves as a testament to his enduring dedication to community empowerment and cultural preservation.

When asked about the significance of the North Trail to the Blackfoot and Siksika Nations, the response Elder Miiksika'am describes delves deep into the cultural and spiritual understanding of navigation and direction. Elder Miiksika'am explained that traditional naming conventions for trails aren't typical, as respect is paid to the natural elements and directions that guide their way of life and refers to the four cardinal directions as North Road, West Road, East Road, and South Road. Sharing, "We find direction today they say GPS we've had GPS a long time ago you know like the medicine wheel. It's a full dynamic guide to...everything on so that's how we navigate through our land."



These directions are imbued with stories and ceremonies, with specific landmarks and features serving as guideposts for their journeys. Elder Miiksika'am shares in his words, "We've been here over a million years the transition in time so everything we see we name it" and "All these things you can coordinate with the cosmos and that's how we find direction." Elder Miiksika'am further highlighted the placement of the medicine wheel as a significant landmark, emphasising the interconnectedness between stories, ceremonies, and the landscape.

Additionally, we asked Elder Miiksika'am if he could provide us with any advice to the staff and students at North Trail High School. The response was meaningful, reflecting on the importance of understanding and honouring the history of the land. Drawing from his experiences as a land consultation officer, Elder Miiksika'am emphasised the necessity of learning the stories and the significance of the region before undertaking any development. He highlighted the sacred sites often overlooked by cities due to a lack of consultation with those who hold ancestral knowledge of the land. Elder Miiksika'am emphasised the importance of acknowledging and honouring the spirits of the land such as offering tobacco as a gesture of respect before initiating any construction or disturbance. He shared that including the Blackfoot word 'Aapatohsoko' as part of the school's name is important if we want to honour the stories he has shared and his ancestors in the right way – it's important for students to hear these stories and remember them. The Blackfoot language is the best way to acknowledge and include these stories for all students. Elder Miiksika'am additionally spoke of the routes of buffalo and the historical significance of the area, sharing a deeper understanding of the land's history and the cultural traditions tied to it. Ultimately, Elder Miiksika'am wishes for his wisdom and knowledge to be passed down through stories to future generations, to ensure that no culture or traditions are lost. Elder Miiksika'am responded with enlightenment that the school's role is like a home for students, teachers, parents, and even grandparents. Drawing from the structure of a tipi model, Elder Miiksika'am emphasised the significance of interconnectedness and balance in community building. He uses the analogy of the tipi poles as representing reality, spirituality, and community, with the youth and elders forming the foundation tied by the creator's laws. Elder Miiksika'am additionally highlighted the role of community courtship as pegs and unforeseen circumstances as pins, illustrating the need for adaptability and openness within the community. Reflecting on the tipi's ability to breathe and adjust, Elder Miiksika'am emphasised the importance of maintaining a welcoming and inclusive environment and, intended to bring the community closer and together.

A Conversation With Our Principal

Interviewed and Written by Wilson

Construction for North Trail High School started in 2019, but the need for it came much earlier. Prior to the addition of North Trail High School, many students had to travel several kilometres to other high schools for their education. According to the CBC these commutes, “could have up to 50 minutes travel time.” Now finally, with the support and determination of so many people, we are able and proud to formally open our school. Our principal Mr. Bester describes how the school opening is, “A celebration of education, a celebration of learning, and a celebration of community.” In his words, the school opening is, also, “An opportunity to thank and show gratitude towards those who played a significant role in helping bring the school to life. Also, it’s a celebration for our staff and our teachers.” The journey and progress of our school followed so many years, and the opening of our school is one of the ways that we want to recognise and be grateful for all that has been done to create this space, as well as to support all the diverse and bright students at North Trail High School. “This building is here to embrace, support, and serve the students that live here.” Our school encompasses and celebrates all the diversity of our students, staff, and our community. When asked about what his favourite thing about our school was, he responded, “There are many things about the building that I love”, specifically, he comments, “One of the most beautiful spaces of course is the Moyis (Blackfoot for “Gathering Space”). The architecture that the architect did, just some of the thought and design like the light that pours in, is very inspiring.”

Out of all the things that came into and continues to sustain the building and our community, the most important of them are the land, the people, and the stories. Regarding the future of North Trail High School, he says, “I hope that we remember the importance of the land that we’re on and the significance of the Treaty 7 territory, and also the significance of Elder Miiksika’am.” He describes how the land “can be such an integral part of learning.” When speaking about all the people involved in the long-awaited development of the school, he “hopes that we remember those who made this dream happen. The community advocates, our trustees, our government officials, our superintendents team, our education directors, parents, community members. We remember with gratitude those who started this journey, and hope that we never forget that and that that is always part of our school culture.” Thoughtfully, he states, “Creating a school that is known for its humanity is something that’s really important to me, and I believe the staff that we hired would also say that. I think back to a hundred years ago, from when my great grandma was in a horse and buggy, and how things are a bit different now, but humanity is still the same.” From this insight, the importance and purpose of opening our school is clear, as well as the heart of North Trail High School - it all lies in the people.

“What creates life in a building is the people.”

The Community Needed North Trail

Written by Sanae

The Trail Tribune had the honour of speaking with Andrew Yule, an advocate for our beautiful North Trail High School! He speaks about the dire need for a school within our community. Yule recalls when he would have to take a bus ride to reach John G. Diefenbaker High School, one of the many reasons as to why he felt that this school was a necessary addition to our community. Yule begins his advocacy journey after being asked to join the Steering Committee for the Advocates for North Calgary High School (ANCHS) advocacy group. He says “...The success of North Trail has inspired me to join and create other advocacy groups for our community...Advocacy can become addictive; when you see positive change in your community it'll motivate you to want to see more.” Yule has participated in a multitude of advocacy events for North Trail and says “What I learned from this is advocacy is that speaking up works but it takes time, patience and being super annoying on social media.” He says that one of the reasons that this school was needed was because parents had been sending their children to other High Schools around the city where they would help volunteer and advocate in other communities; this was needed here as well. Andrew Yule and many other advocates have been a big-time contributor towards the making of North Trail High School, and has truly impacted our community for the better.



BUILDING NORTH TRAIL



“There is a lot of advocacy work that needs to be done in North Central Calgary and I look forward to seeing North Trail Nighthawks being the voices for that **advocacy.**”

Tales from The Trail

What are you grateful for at NTHS?

Interviewed by Ayesha and Ms. Morrison

Written by Ayesha and Mehraal

For this special edition of The Trail Tribune, we asked our community to celebrate North Trail High School with the question *"What are you grateful for at NTHS?"*

We wanted to capture and celebrate the opening of the school and all the elements we are grateful for at North Trail. The answers show how we were able to build school community and how facilities around the school have allowed students to learn in a positive environment. Student responses also show how people around the school are able to feel safe and welcomed in North Trail's environment.

"I'm grateful for the really high ceilings."

"I'm grateful for the amazing students and diversity."

"I'm grateful for the nice architecture."

"I'm grateful for just meeting new people."

"I'm grateful for the diversity of students."

"I'm grateful for all the people I've met here and all my friends and the people here are very kind."

"I'm grateful for the library."

"I'm grateful that our washrooms are clean."

"I'm grateful for the cafeteria and all the food they make because it is so good."

"I'm grateful for having a locker."

"I'm grateful for the building and the caretaking staff that keep it looking this good."

"I'm grateful for my friends, my family, the ladies, the homework, schoolwork, every type of work."

"I'm grateful for my basketball team."

"I'm grateful for all of the clubs and all of the teams that are available at this school because I have all of these choices and I feel like I overwork myself because I'm in too many clubs."

"I'm grateful for the inclusive and diverse environment. There's a lot of muslim people and there's a lot of diversity and culture here."

"The construction workers that spend a lot of time working on the school every single day."

"I'm grateful for the nice facility, good resources and quality stuff to use."

"I'm grateful for all the events my school holds like um dinners and events and stuff."

"I'm grateful for all the facilities we have like the good wifi and computers."

"I'm grateful for the community and the athletics. As a new school it's awesome to be a part of something we are building."

"I'm grateful it's a new school so everything is new and it feels fresh out of the oven."

"I'm grateful I get new instruments in band because usually they're nasty."

"I'm grateful for the moyis and library."

"I'm grateful for all my lovely students and all the work they put into their classes."

"I'm grateful for the gym."

"I'm grateful for the nice facility, nice gym and it's just a really nice school."

"I'm grateful for the breakout rooms."

"I'm grateful for the effort teachers put into teaching."

"I'm grateful for our theatre."

"I'm grateful that I can have good bubble tea from school."

"I'm grateful for the freedom I have."

"I'm grateful for the opportunity to do lots of sports."

"I'm grateful for my friends."

"I'm grateful for the school pride."

"I'M GRATEFUL FOR THE FLIGHT DECK."

"I'm grateful for the options available."

"I'm grateful for the kind and nice teachers"

"I love TVs. They're so cool. They tell me when class is starting."

"The classes and the diverse amount of clubs."

"I'm grateful for the student environment."

"I'm grateful for the windows."

"I'm grateful for our sports teams and football mainly."

"I'm very grateful for the great staff and teachers."