

Editorial

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Pat Muise and his Grandson, Brody at the Bay St. George Mi'kmaq Powwow

Be Patient, Wait for the Signs

We are each uniquely led, whether by the Creator or our own intuition, to achieve what is in us to become or accomplish in this life. If we are patient and still we will notice not only the calling of our own heart's desire, but also certain phrases, objects, or events that resonate with us in a way that shows us the way to get there. These could be interpreted as signs that seem to say 'I'm interested in this, *my spirit wants to go this way.*' This is how we find our calling, our path or just the next step. Sometimes it's how you decide what to write about, and identify the story that needs to be told. *Be patient, wait for the signs.*

Pat Muise, a gentleman I know from home and often see at Church, called the Qalipu office recently to talk to Chief Mitchell. Chief was out that day so I took a message and had a chat with Pat. Something he said left an impression.

He said, "How can we ever be happy if we aren't grateful for what we already have? The more gratitude you have, the happier you will be."

"Pat, I'm writing that down for the newsletter." I joked, "It's that good."

We had a big laugh about it but, the truth was that those words were good medicine, a sign, on a day that I was feeling sour about a situation and needed to change my perspective.

A few days later I talked to Pat again at the Tuesday night drum group at the Bay St. George Cultural Circle. Near the end of the evening, Pat asked me to join some of the drummers and all the children on the big drum. It was my first time being asked to sit at the big drum and, I was honoured. Sitting in, I prepared myself for a serious moment. Much to my surprise, we began with Itsy Bitsy Spider, moved on to Old McDonald and finished with an uproarious version of the Sponge Bob Square Pants theme song.

Hanging around afterward I again joked with Pat that this had to go in the newsletter: "My First Time on the Big Drum and Sponge Bob". Then I realized, making the same joke about this fake newsletter story, that maybe this was a sign to explore a real story waiting to be told.

Pat's Story

Pat had called the office that day looking to talk to Chief Mitchell about possible support for a drop-in centre in Stephenville. I asked Pat to tell me more about that.

He said, "It's an addiction recovery drop-in centre. A safe place to come and talk openly about addiction and be around other people who are going through the same thing. We support each other."

The drop-in centre, run by Don Russell, a retired addictions counsellor, is a place to gather socially without alcohol. "There's internet there, you can play pool or darts. You don't have to talk about addiction if you don't want to. You can just have a coffee and be social," Pat said.

When I asked if he minded me sharing this story he said no, there's nothing to hide. He said, "I struggled for years with shame and denial about my addiction. I was isolated. Now that I've found help, there's nothing to hide or lie about. I live my life in the open and talking about it can help others do the same."

Pat talked about the problems he sees in his community like home invasions and break & enters, as a result of drug and alcohol addiction. He commented that alcoholism and other addictions affect the whole family, the whole community. He wants all these people, young and old, to know that there is support out there at regular meetings and at the drop-in centre where you can work on staying sober, one day at a time.

"We share our experiences, our strengths and our hopes. We understand each other. You don't have to do it alone."

Pat Muise has been sober for 3 years and 7 months. He attributes much of his success to a spiritual awakening and counsel received at a rehabilitation treatment centre for native people in Eskasoni. It is accessible through the Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program and Non Insured Health Benefits available to Qalipu members. Read more about this in Renée Dyer's latest