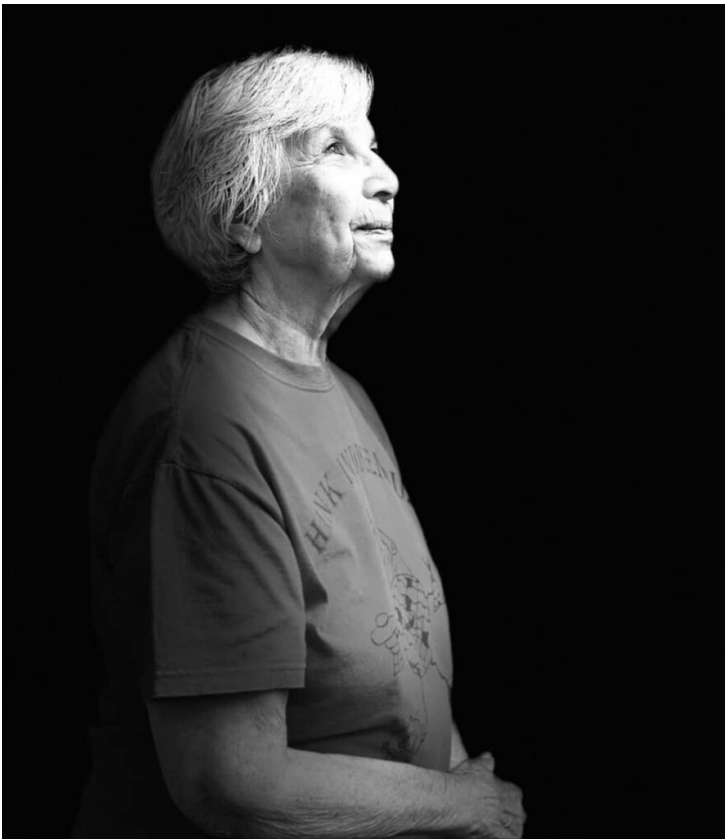


Ada Tinney's legacy lives on



By Chris Drost

Referring to someone who has passed as having led a life well-lived, might seem cliché, but when it comes to Ada Tinney, it is the perfect description. With Ada's death on July 25 at the age of 82, comes an outpouring of love and emotion for a wife, mother, aunt, friend, colleague and community leader who inspired so many.

Words from daughter Noreen.

The Bancroft Times caught up with Ada's daughter, Noreen Tinney, to learn more about her mother's early life and how she came to play such a key role not only in the Algonquin community but in all of North Hastings.

Ada was a lifelong resident of Bancroft. She was born and raised on the Monck Road in Bancroft. Her parents were Sam and Ina Baumhour and Ina's father was Sam Baptiste. After attending high school in Bancroft, Ada worked for hydro for a few years until she and husband Carl had their first child, Noreen. Scott and Robin followed.

Ada was kept busy raising the children for the next few years. When Robin headed off to school, Ada took a position as a secretary with the school board. She started out at the school in L'Amable but later moved to Bancroft Public School. She retired from there in 1994.

When asked about the sharing of Algonquin culture within the family in her youth, Noreen explained that it was not part of her childhood. "My grandmother had no contact with her father. When she died in the early '90s, we started to delve into things and Ada got involved in the Algonquin Land Claim," says Noreen.

During this time, Ada taught herself to make hand drums and researched and learned how to do smudging. Around that time, Bancroft council had been contemplating changing the name of Chemaushgon Road to Airport Road. Although the Chemaushgon Road name was not the correct Algonquin spelling, Shawashkong, Ada made the pitch that it be kept to reflect the early Algonquin beginnings in the community. "This started her career as an educator, sharing Algonquin culture," says Noreen.

Ada took part in the land claim talks at Pikwakanagan and began sharing Algonquin culture in the local schools. "This kept her very busy," explained Noreen.

"When the Algonquin Inòdewiziwin Centre was proposed, Ada was the key person in the presentation and then took on the role as elder and planner. I am now following in her moccasins," says Noreen.

During the '90s Ada did a lot of research into making drums. "She and Dad would go across the road and harvest cedar which then had to be soaked and bent for hoops. It was a difficult process and so eventually she found someone with steam equipment to make them for her," adds Noreen.

When Noreen started the Women's Drumming Circle in 2018 along with Urpi Pine, Ada was one of the original members. They started singing right away and had their first performance for Indigenous Day at York River Public School a week after starting up. "It is a really important thing for the community. The Shawashkong Ikwe Singers and Drummers now has 11 or 12 members," says Noreen.

Ada began to go to the schools to share Algonquin culture and very much enjoyed interacting with the children.

When asked about her mother's greatest legacy to the community, Noreen says her mother gave so much of herself to the community, particularly the Indigenous community. "She was the 'go-to' person. She would help whenever she could. She had a genuine love of people and she liked interacting with children particularly.

"So many children remember her as such a nice lady. Her legacy will be the fact that she was willing to give so much to the entire community, not just the Algonquin community, that it is part of our history and now people have learned about it," says Noreen.

Thoughts from son Robin

"My mother was always creative. I was always amazed at her curiosity about all things art. If I had a passing interest in art things, she was always willing to give it a go. When we were young mom's time was limited but she took a stained-glass course when we got old enough, really enjoyed it and was thoroughly good at it," says Ada's son, Robin.

Robin agrees with his sister Noreen that although they always knew they were Algonquin, it was not something that was part of their early life. There was always the fear of prejudice. "Once my mother got involved with the Pikwakanagan and the land claims, it [Algonquin culture] became much more prevalent in the household. People would come to the house afterward," says Robin.

"I was interested in Algonquin culture and probably knew more than my mother to start, but she and Katherine Cannon did lots of research over 30 years. She met more Algonquins from other communities and learned a lot. She really enjoyed it," says Robin.

"My entire life, all my life, people say, are you related to Ada? I am not nearly as nice as Ada. Everyone said she is a kind, caring and calm person," added Robin.

Until earlier this year, Ada and husband Carl, were constantly meeting new friends. "Our home was besieged by visitors, but that was a nice thing," says Robin.

When asked how he thinks his mother will be remembered, Robin explains that it will depend on who is doing the remembering.

?The biggest remembrances numerically will be the students, teachers and staff at the schools,? explains Robin.

To the greater family, Robin believes Ada will be best remembered as a thoughtful, creative person, always doing something with kids.

?She had a wonderful sense of humour. She was genuinely a nice human being, full of grace. She was careful to make people feel welcome and comfortable,? says Robin.

?My mother was always more than willing to step forward and stand up for things if they needed to be stood up for.?

A great-niece reflects

Ada's great niece, Diane Martin, who is the Indigenous cultural coordinator at NHCS, says that Ada was the first member in their family to engage in the Algonquin culture, and share it.

?Ada was my Elder and my role model. I always looked to her for guidance to ensure I was walking the right path and regaining our culture,? says Martin.

Ada taught Diane how to make drums, rattles and conduct sunrise ceremonies. She also taught her how to be a good person. ?She really cared about our community and wanted Kijicho Madaouskarini to move ahead in the right way and learn teachings in the right way,? adds Martin.

?One of the things I enjoyed most was singing with Ada. Her favourite song was The Butterfly Song,? says Martin.

When asked what she will remember most about Ada, Martin says, ?so many things, she was the stability of our community. When people needed something, she was strong, someone to lean on and someone who would listen, but she was also soft and caring. She was always listening if you needed guidance, whether it was difficult or easy. Even in her passing, her body was weak but her mind was strong,? explains Martin.

Remembrances by colleagues Jessica Anderson ? executive director at NHCS

?In 2016 I was a committee member for Hastings Prince Edward First Nation Metis Inuit Planning Committee where we were facilitating cultural awareness training for North Hastings service providers. As the training was taking place on Algonquin unceded territory it was important to have an Algonquin elder to be present. We reached out to Ada and from then on, she has been my dear friend and colleague,? says Jessica Anderson, executive director at North Hastings Children's Services.

In 2017 Chief Stephen Hunter and Anderson met to discuss the development of the partnership. ?Recognizing Ada's work in education and her sharing of the teachings and culture of the Kijicho Manito Madaouskarini Algonquin First Nation, she was the perfect person to help with the project,? explains Anderson.

Ada shared stories of growing up without knowing Algonquin culture, how she taught herself how to make drums and how she shared those teachings in the schools. She spent time speaking with community members and from all these experiences the plan for Algonquin Inòdewiziwin was developed.

?It struck me at the time that the value of her knowledge and experience needed to be recognized. She had volunteered so much time to the community and she had so many wonderful ideas. She was hired as elder and planner and in 2018 the proposal was approved. Her ideas have come to life and today on unceded Algonquin territory we once again have families connecting with elders and Algonquin community members, children and youth drumming and singing traditional songs, ceremony returning and generations learning together,? says Anderson.

Anderson believes Ada's legacy to the community is that she has inspired Indigenous and non-Indigenous community to continue the journey together. Continue on the path of connecting through culture, continue with the Algonquin language revitalization with our children, continue connecting with art and nature, and continue with events such as Indigenous Day and Truth and Reconciliation Day where we celebrate and reflect. "I only hope that in my life I can make as much of an impact as she has made to our community," adds Anderson.

Linda Holbrook ? former co-worker at Bancroft Public School

"I learned so much from Ada during the seven years I worked with her. She was just awesome with the kids. Ada was very classy, always lots of fun with a very positive attitude. There was never anything said that was negative," says Linda Holbrook, former colleague of Ada's at Bancroft Public School.

"I learned her respect for children and how each child mattered to her. Each child was important to her," explains Holbrook.

"Ada was such an artist. I have so much of her stained glass. I will also remember her as a team player, she held things together for everybody. I will miss her," says Holbrook.

Joan Kay ? friend and former co-worker at BPS

Ada became good friends with Joan Kay, who also worked at Bancroft Public School?. "It would be hard to know Ada without developing a friendship. Ada was what a true lady is all about. She was kind, caring and treated others with respect," says Kay.

When asked how she thinks Ada will be remembered, Kay says, "I think that depends on who is doing the remembering."

"Ada was a very talented lady, and her work embraces so many homes. When she got involved with sharing Indigenous culture, it opened a whole new chapter in her life," explains Kay.

"Ada made us all richer for knowing her. The world is a sadder place without her."