



Timeless contributions. Endless possibilities.

## Profile: Belcourt Brosseau Métis Award Recipient Ashley Villeneuve



My name is Ashley Villeneuve and I have lived in a town, now a city, my whole life. I went to a small elementary school called Our Lady of Peace. This is where I made friendships that have stood the test of time. Once I reached high school, many of my friends left to go to the bigger schools. Yet I felt a need to stay behind and graduate from the same school my brother did. This was a huge change in my life but one for the better because I made friends with six very special girls. Until then, I always played with boys and considered them true friends. With my new friends, I learned the hardships and blessings of life. Because of my experiences in high school, I

decided to enter the field of psychology. However, post secondary is easier said than done. I had the grades to get into university but focusing only on school had left my bank account a little dry.

After I graduated with honors, I decided to take a year off while most of my friends went off to universities. This was one of the best decisions I have ever made because it allowed me to gain a better perspective on life and what it costs to attend school. I found out that I needed another science to enroll in a Bachelor of Science for Psychology. So I decided to bite the bullet and take chemistry through distance learning. I found working a job and taking a class a lot harder than I expected, but in the end chemistry was my best science mark. The cost of getting that good mark was losing time at work, so I just kept trying my best and praying that things would work out.

Ever since I was in junior high, I have been going to see my Métis Career Counselor, Rusty. He told me about the Belcourt Brosseau scholarship. Many other students he knew had been awarded the scholarship so he urged me to apply. I did, and two months later I got a rather thick letter in the mail. I will never forget opening my letter. I was absolutely elated when I read that Belcourt

Brosseau would sponsor me. My parents were so proud and thankful that they, too, joined me in celebration.

Together with my family of five, we drove to Edmonton to attend the awards celebration. This was a wonderful event. I had the chance to hear a few words of wisdom and personally thank the men and women who made the scholarship possible. But above all else I got a true feeling for what it meant to be part of the Métis community. Between my Mom and Grandma, I had been involved with the Métis community my whole life, but being an active participant is something else entirely. As I listened to the speeches my elders had given, I came to understand that to be a part of this community meant helping each other and giving what one could back to the community.

Not long after the ceremony I was off to tour the University of Calgary campus and buy my books. At this point, I was working at a day camp and it was here that something clicked for me. I had the blessing of meeting three Métis foster girls. During the last month before school, I got to know the girls well including the hardships they face as foster children. It was not unusual to have foster kids attending the camp, but these three were different. With the memory of the award ceremony fresh in my mind, I had an epiphany. Wouldn't it be great if I could use my psychology degree to help Métis families just like these three girls? This would be a wonderful way for me to give back to the community that helped me further my education.

The University of Calgary campus was overwhelmingly huge but beautiful. However, the classes, with more than 400 students to a room, were just plain scary. At the university, the Métis centre helped me out with everything from networking to studying. Knowing that I had a whole community backing my education, I tried my absolute best. I ended my first year with a 3.3 GPA. Now I am well on my way to getting my degree in psychology. This scholarship has given me a chance at furthering my education, and better my life using my degree. This scholarship also made me hope that I, too, will be able to make a difference in the Métis community.

Yours truly,

Ashley Villeneuve