

Chris Wilke Memorial Scholarship

After the bitterly cold winter we've had, who doesn't appreciate the warmth of a fur lined hat or a beautiful fur jacket to wear. Fortunately, we have a system in place that ensures we will all continue to have wonderful fur products available for many years to come. Without regulations, laws and rules in place, we could potentially eradicate a certain species like the beaver or lynx. That would be totally against all that the Alberta Trappers Association stands for.

I am Metis and I come from a long line of trappers. My great grandfather was a Cree trapper in the North West Territories who used to trap with a dog sled team. Now, while we don't commonly use that practice any more, we, as society, still trap for some of the same reasons. Food, clothing, income and animal control come to mind. The trappers who came before us are an example of how far we've come in society. I like to believe that we aren't all that different from those long ago days. Views on trapping may be different, but we have made a niche for ourselves in the world and as we continue to go forward, I hope that we represent these new ideas and demonstrate that we are conscientious of the world and how to preserve the furbearers that we so admire.

My grandfather, Fred Neumann (who I'm named after) has always been involved with trapping or wildlife control. He always shows a great respect for animals and the systems he uses for trapping. I've seen over the years how accomplished he is when it comes to trapping. He always has a kind word to say about the trapping institution and is very knowledgeable and full of information when asked questions.

I believe that it is due to people like my grandfather Fred that I have such a respect for the industry. I want to go into the world of science and biology and get my Bachelor of Science degree. Hopefully I can further my education and get a Masters and a PhD in Biology as well. Knowledge is power and I want to get to learn as much as I can about the world we live in. Maybe through my journey I can pass on something to the next generation.

Trapping humanely is very important and my grandfather Fred lives by the rules and regulations that are in place.

Poaching hurts not only the animals that are taken, but also the very standards that the Alberta Trappers Association represents. Rules are in place for reasons. Rules keep animals and their numbers in the wild under control. There are many cycles that animal species go through. If we didn't control when and how we trapped during these cycles, we could easily over trap and endanger one of the fur bearers. The Alberta Trappers Association ensures that we all follow these guidelines and that in turn ensures that we keep a healthy supply of fur bearers in the market.

The Alberta Trappers Association is a much needed institution and I hope it will be around for many more generations to come. The wisdom and knowledge of the members is an untapped resource that we should all take advantage of. If you're as lucky as I am to have someone in the business, take the time to sit down and hear their views and stories. They can probably teach you a thing or two!

Fred Neumann