Name: Beedahbin Peltier

Community: Wiikwemikooong Unceded Territory

Ethnicity: Anishinaabe

Occupation: Professor of Indigenous Studies

Education: Bachelor of Indigenous Studies and Political Studies

Field of Science: Environmental Science

What inspired you to enter into this particular field of Science?

A lot of my family and friends along with my love for the environment. Having the connection with the land and everything it provides. I feel more comfortable on the land and in the bush. The more I connect and am present with on land, the more I cared for it and wanted to ensure it was healthy. Working with some of my students, they study it so intently that I am constantly learning now from them. Working with my friend Joe Pitawanakwat, we work to create an understanding that we are a reflection of the land. A lot of people in my community inspire each other that way but we still need to do more to balance that relationship. We rely on the land and we need to give back. As Anishinaabe, our Elders, they tell us that we are part of this land. We try our best to live by our teachings that come from creation and try to honour that.

Who was your mentor or inspiration?

The first person would be my great grandpa Casimir Trudeau. He gave me my Anishinaabe name and told me about the responsibility and gifts that come with that name. Every child is born a gift. He really was the pillar of truth for me growing up. He grounded me in who I am today, knowing my culture and the purpose of my life. He taught me how to live and enjoy my life through the interactions of others.
How do you think Indigenous Knowledge can help to advance Science and Technology?

Science gives us knowledge but we also have a responsibility to that knowledge. Anishinaabe people have a way about how they see that knowledge. Science can function on its own and can be disconnected from other related subject areas. For Anishinaabe people, everything is connected along with a responsibility that comes with it. Knowledge is there to inspire people to do something with it. Anishinaabe people bring this deep rooted ideology about our relationship and responsibility to the environment.

How do you incorporate Indigenous Knowledge in the work you do?

I try and bring everything from an Anishinaabe perspective. The reality though, is for Anishinaabe Science, it is hard to translate everything. I want to make it accessible for all people. Many Elders today tell our generation the importance of our language and how we need to think in an Anishinaabe way to understand our connection. In our way of thinking, we have many layers to it. We see the environment in this way as well. There is always something to be known and experienced. It is important to be critical thinkers and to listen to what the land is trying to show us and teach us. By getting out onto the land I try to have my students connect to their own experience with the land.