





# LEADERSHIP THROUGH THE DRUM

Kobe Keevik of Tuktoyaktuk travels to  
the other side of the tree line

Words and photos by Nathalie Heiberg-Harrison

“It’s important to teach our traditions, to continue a true way of life and learn everything real about life through hands-on hard work and experiences without influences of modern society. To continue the Dene way of life and to strengthen their spirit, connect them to the spirits of the land, to enjoy the spirits of the land, to become capable being on the land. To have another culture like Kobe’s come over is good, to give him our spirit, the power of the land, to show him how to come on the land and respect it, how we feed fire and how we do things. **What it does is give both cultures the tools of the modern society to carry on the heart of the past.**”

-Gilbert Cazon, Liidlil Kue First Nation

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CONTINUES.”

-DYLAN EVETALEGA



**K**obe Keevik is patient. He's thoughtful. He's soft spoken, and from an outsider's perspective he has a habit of camouflaging himself into his surroundings, appearing as a secondary character in the action around him. But to his peers at the Leadership Through the Drum Camp in Fort Simpson, he was an undeniable leader - through the power of his quiet strength and determination to help the people around him.

“Watching him, he's going to become an excellent leader because of his patience, his attitude and how he carries himself so well,” says Mary Jane Cazon, a facilitator at the Dene drum camp. “Whenever you ask him for his help, he immediately jumps on and he's able to help and just

cope with everything. Watching the way he moves, at a slow pace, I just know that he'll be fine at the end. He'll be able to go home with all the knowledge we have shared with him.”

The Leadership Through the Drum Camp, a leadership camp for teenage boys, was held across the Mackenzie River from Fort Simpson Oct. 11 to 18. The camp, run by Northern Youth Leadership, a project of Tides Canada, was created to cultivate leadership in youth from across the North. Altogether, seven boys attended from the communities of Yellowknife, Hay River, Lutsel K'e, Fort Simpson, Cambridge Bay and Tuktoyaktuk. The participants helped to maintain the camp, learned survival and land skills, hunted grouse and moose, set snares for



rabbits, and made a traditional Dene drum from birch wood and moose hide. Northern Youth Leadership facilitators Ali McConnell, Shauna Morgan and Gordie Liske, as well as Gilbert and Mary Jane Cazon of Fort Simpson, led the camp.

Although Kobe and his peers were strangers at first, the seven teens bonded throughout the week as they assembled their drums and slowly discovered the similarities and differences between their northern cultures.

“I learned a lot at this camp. I learned how to make a drum. I learned that the Dene people show a lot of respect to their elders and their animals and their surroundings,” Kobe says of his experience in Fort Simpson. Dylan Evetalegak,

a participant from Cambridge Bay, agrees. “It’s very important to learn about other Northern cultures because we’re going to go extinct if nobody continues,” he says. Corbyn Kavanna-Klengenber, also from Cambridge Bay, adds there’s “a lot to learn” about his neighbours south of the tree line. “There’s a lot to do out in the bush. I like it out here.”

“With new kids from other communities, getting together, learning about everyone’s culture and how they do things, it’s been amazing and fun at the same time, all the stuff that’s been going on,” says Dacho “Wiseman” Catholique of Lutsel K’e. “It’s been a fun experience. I’m happy to take that home with me.”



LEADER GORDIE LISKE, 27, DETTAH



CORBYN KAVANNA-KLENGENBERG, 14, CAMBRIDGE BAY



KOBE KEEVIK, 15, TUKTOYAKTUK



HUNTER LAFFERTY, 14, HAY RIVER

**“ I JUST LIKE GOING OUT HUNTING AND BEING OUT ON THE LAND. IT'S JUST LIKE YOU'RE FREE.”**  
-KOBE KEEVIK



DACHO "WISEMAN" CATHOLIQUE, 15, LUTSEL KE



DYLAN EVETALEGAK, 14, CAMBRIDGE BAY



SPENCER LOCKHART, 15, YELLOWKNIFE



BRODIE SNIDER, 14, FORT SIMPSON



A highlight for the participants was learning to make their own Dene drum in the bush from traditional materials, under the guidance of Michael Cazon, Gordie and Gilbert. “My favourite part of the trip: expressing my creativity, building wood boxes, brooms, candle holders and coat hangers with materials from the land, but the biggest part was making a drum,” says Dacho. “I guess the best thing that I loved is making everybody happy, and making my community and parents proud.”

Kobe already knew how to drum in the Inuvialuit tradition, but this was the first time he has tried drumming the Dene way. “It was very cool. You could just feel the beat in your heart,” he says.

“During the time he was here, I realized that he really enjoyed our culture,” says Mary Jane of Kobe. “He found it so unique

because of the abundance of trees that we’re living in, and the animals. He just loved it. He also realized how important it is that we continue with our traditions and that he’s able to look at his culture and at ours and he’s able to see the differences, and still we’re able to come together. I noticed that with him. He’s a very excellent young man and he’s really working well with all the students, and he’s able to cope with whatever we were able to share here with him, and take that knowledge with him.”

Kobe says he will never forget the time he spent at camp, away from town and alongside his new friends. “I just like going out hunting and being out on the land. It’s just like you’re free.” ■