

Lamouche wouldn't have it any other way!



Gift Lake youth Karla Lamouche participated in the Bold Eagle program last summer. She says the experience was an eye-opener.

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Getting up at sunrise most mornings is not what most teenager's idea of a good time is during the summer. But Karla Lamouche wouldn't have it another way. The Gift Lake teenager participated in the Bold Eagle program in July and August for six weeks. "My whole summer was a life-changing experience," says Lamouche. "What I accomplished is not what too many young adults would've done." Bold Eagle is an introductory program to the Canadian Arm Forces and a partnership between the Department of National Defence, First Nations and Aboriginal organizations from Western Canada. It originated in Saskatchewan and has expanded to allow participation by Aboriginal youth from all four western provinces and north-western Ontario. The program's goals are to develop self-discipline, teamwork skills, self confidence and physical fitness. The two-part program is comprised of a four-day cultural camp followed by a military recruit training course. The cultural camp is conducted by Elders of different First Nations and Aboriginal groups and focuses on common spiritual beliefs. The course is the standard Army Reserve Basic Military Qualification and is taught by military personnel. Subjects included are general military knowledge, weapons handling and navigation, First Aid, drill and survival skills. The importance of teamwork is stressed throughout. Lamouche applied to Bold Eagle and was accepted. She says she enjoyed the program and made lifetime friends. "I met a lot of new people," says Lamouche. "I went to the program not knowing one individual and came out with a lot of great friendships. "There were times I wanted to go home, we all got lonesome and thought of calling it quits but my new friends would encourage me to stay." Lamouche had to train before the Bold Eagles training. She had to be able to run two kilometres within 12 minutes. She also had to pass the physical test, aptitude test, medical and an interview. However, it was all worth it. Lamouche says highlights of the course included climbing 35 feet high, the C7 rifle range, and field exercises where participants did day and night navigation. Lamouche would return in a heartbeat. "I would do it all over again if I could," says Lamouche. "It was by far the best summer I ever had. It was well worth my entire summer - getting up early in the morning, making sure that you fixed your bed, room to be neat and tidy. Our rooms were inspected and if we did not do a good job, we had to do it again until they were satisfied with it." And she offers advice for anyone considering the program. "I would suggest to all youth to apply for this. I would also like to thank my Mom and Dad for their support. In the spring I had to run two kilometres in 12 minutes. Thank you, Dad, for running with me." Successful graduates of the Bold Eagle course are encouraged to remain active in the Canadian military, but there is absolutely no obligation to do so. Karla is the daughter of Allan and Bonnie Lamouche of Gift Lake.