



## LEAD YOUR WAY! Governor General Helps Honour 2006-07 National Aboriginal Role Models

Twelve Aboriginal youth from across Canada, ranging in age from 13 to 30, were inducted into the 2006–07 National Aboriginal Role Model Program during a ceremony at Rideau Hall on October 16, 2006. The ceremony was presided over by Her Excellency, The Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, who awarded each of the role models with an award in the form of a small crystal sculpture.

“All of you being honoured today give hope to so many people, both in your local communities and in the broader community of Canada,” the Governor General said in a speech at the ceremony.  
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**The 2006–07 National Aboriginal Role Models, inducted at Rideau Hall on October 16, 2006.**

**Back Row:** (left to right) Terry Lyall, Aisa Pirti, Alisa Blake, Shane Byrne, Daniel McKennitt, Chelsea Lavallée, Alberta Eashappie-Prettyshield, Christine Smith. **Front Row:** (left to right) Derek Sanderson, Alexander Angnaluaq, acting NAHO Chairperson Derek Debassige, Governor General Michaëlle Jean, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario James K. Bartleman, Caitlin Tolley and Megan Pizzo-Lyall.

Photo by Fred Cattroll.

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“Through the choices you have made, and through your hard work every day, you clearly demonstrate to members of the First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities that it is possible to succeed in Canada, while also remaining true to your own cultural traditions, which are the most ancient on this continent.”

Among the inductees to this year’s program were several scholars, star athletes and young volunteers, as well as an aspiring pilot, an amateur actress, jingle dress dancers, a science whiz, a medical student, a Young Métis Leader, an RCMP constable and an auxiliary member of the RCMP.

“It is great to see such a wide variety of talent and accomplishment in this year’s group of role models,” said Karin Kettler, coordinator of the program. “And what I especially like is the way the communities are responding to the program. Each of them wants to have their own role model to represent them.”

The National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO) developed the new National Aboriginal Role Model Program three years ago as a way to recognize and honour First Nations, Inuit and Métis youth who are leading the way in their communities. By making healthy and positive choices, the role models demonstrate how leading a healthy lifestyle has led them to success. Selected annually by a committee made up of role models from previous years, the chosen candidates will travel to communities across Canada to share their stories with other Aboriginal youth.

The third installment of the program was the first to involve the Governor General. For many of the role models, meeting the Governor General was a once in a lifetime experience.



(left to right) Alexander Angnaluak, Alisa Blake, Shane Byrne and Alberta Eashappie-Prettyshield.



Governor General Michèle Jean.

“Meeting with her Excellency was the greatest thing that ever happened to me,” said Aisa Pirti, a 19-year-old Inuk and Canadian Junior Ranger from Akulivik, Nunavik, in northern Quebec. “I’ve never had an experience like it. It was exciting!”

For Shane Byrne, a role model from the Innu community of Natuashish, Newfoundland and Labrador, meeting the Governor General was a bit nerve-racking at first, but the aspiring national volleyball player quickly warmed up to Her Excellency.

“I was kind of nervous meeting the Governor General, but she’s a very nice lady and great to talk to,” Byrne said. “While I was talking to Her Excellency, I learned that she is planning on making a trip to my home town in Natuashish and she wants me to plan something for her arrival. I’m sure everyone here will be happy to see her and it will be a great honour.”

There were other firsts too for this year’s program. The youngest role model ever, Alexander Angnaluak, 13, of Inuit and First Nations descent, was inducted into the program this year. And Labrador, which has not had a role model in either of the last two year’s programs, had two inductees this year: Shane Byrne and Terry Lyall.

“We have representatives from First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth with a variety of backgrounds, but they all share one thing—a determination to be the best that they can be,” said Carole Lafontaine, acting Chief Executive Officer of NAHO.

Indeed, as their brief biographies attest, the determination displayed by each of the 2006–07 role models has paid off in countless different ways.

## Alexander Angnaluk:

From science to the arts, sports and geography, 13-year-old Alexander has a wide range of personal interests. He is of Inuit and First Nations descent and is currently living in Cold Lake First Nation, Alberta, but has also lived in Kugluktuk, Nunavut.



Alexander was part of a “Bully Buster Program” where he mentored students and worked with teachers to prevent bullying in his school. He has also received recognition for his many achievements, including the Kelly Haviyok Memorial Award and Male Athlete of the Year award.

He especially enjoys science classes and recently won first place at the Treaty Six Science Fair. Alexander’s goal is to go to post-secondary school for environmental sciences.

His message to youth is, “Stay in school, school is cool, school is great and remember, say no to drugs and alcohol.”



## Shane Byrne:

Shane, 21, is from the small isolated community of Natuashish, Newfoundland and Labrador, formally known as Davis Inlet. He is eager to share his culture and Innu-aimun language with other young people. Shane is currently the recreation assistant in his community and also volunteers his time to coach the local volleyball team.

Shane leads an active and healthy lifestyle. He is widely recognized for his athletic abilities, especially in volleyball, table tennis and judo. He received many awards, including the Tom Longboat Award and the Robbie West Memorial Award for the best minor league player volleyball player in the province of Newfoundland.

His goal is to compete on Canada’s National Men’s Volleyball team. Shane strongly believes that, “To become a top quality elite player, you have to train hard and become a leader on the court.”

## Alisa Blake:

Alisa, 28, has a passion for flying, which she says gives her a sense of freedom. She is currently completing the Professional Pilot Program with Sky Wings Aviation Academy Ltd. in Red Deer, Alberta. She graduated in 1997 from Chief Julius School in Fort McPherson, NWT. In 2005, she was a recipient of the Aviation Career Development Bursary and completed her first solo flight in November 2005.

Alisa is from a big family with three sisters and four brothers. Her inspiration is her 10-year-old son, Austin. Austin is the reason why she wants to be the best person that she can be and achieve the goals that she has set for herself. “Pursuing your dreams and goals with success is the sound of freedom!”



## Alberta Eashappie-Prettyshield:

A passionate youth from the Carry the Kettle First Nation in Saskatchewan, Alberta is eager to bring the Nakoda language back to her community. At every opportunity, the 19-year-old encourages other youth to speak their language. Alberta is equally passionate about promoting her culture and is an accomplished jingle dress dancer who has been named Senior Princess of Carry the Kettle Pow Wow.

Alberta graduated from the Nakoda Oyade Education Centre (NOEC) in 2005 and was named Second Valedictorian of her class. She enjoys working with community groups and has volunteered as a teaching assistant for elementary students and as a receptionist for the band office and health clinic in her community. She is also an aspiring actress and has appeared in such television shows as “Moccasin Flats” and “Corner Gas.”

In 2006, Alberta was named the NOEC School Idol. Her goal is to become a marine biologist. Alberta’s message to youth is, “With the power of God, anything is possible.”



## Chelsea Lavallée:

At 15, Chelsea is an accomplished square dancer who is “honoured to be recognized for doing the things she likes to do while promoting her Métis culture.” Since 2003, she has been a proud member of the St. Ambroise Youth Steppers Square Dance Team and has performed locally and throughout Manitoba.

As a volunteer, Chelsea has helped fundraise for the St. Ambroise Community Centre and Teens Against Drinking and Driving at her school. She has also helped organize activities for children at the Métis Festival, Saskatoon Festival and a children’s Halloween party. Chelsea is an excellent student and has been on the honour roll since 2001.

In 2006, Chelsea was recognized by the Métis community by receiving a National Métis Youth Role Model award. Chelsea’s career goal is to become a veterinarian.



## Terry Lyall:

As a Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) constable, Terry has made his community of Nain, Nunatsiavut (Labrador), extremely proud. He graduated from the RCMP Training Academy in 1999 and has worked in several Labrador communities.

Terry, 30, has always been involved in his community. He volunteered with the fire department, recreation department, Citizens on Patrol program and Big Brothers Big Sisters. He was also the first president of the Labrador Inuit Youth Council.

Terry was honoured when the RCMP asked him to become a rider in the Musical Ride program. Prior to joining with the RCMP, he had never been on a horse. He was chosen to join the group as a result of his hard work and training. Now Terry tours all over Canada with the Musical Ride program. “If you work hard at what you want in life, you will get it,” Terry says. “Stay in school!”



## Daniel McKennitt:

Daniel, 23, is an Anishnabe (Ojibway) medical student from Sandy Bay First Nation, Manitoba. He is currently attending the University of Alberta Medical School, studying to become a physician. Daniel has received numerous awards, including the Alberta Aboriginal Health Careers Bursary for leaders in the area of Aboriginal health.

Daniel has worked for many organizations including as a youth advisor for the Urban Multipurpose Aboriginal Youth Centre.

Daniel abstains from drugs and alcohol. He promotes a proud and healthy lifestyle. Daniel still plays football and is learning more Ojibway everyday. Daniel’s inspirational message to his peers is, “Stay in school and stay healthy. Follow your dreams and never give up!”



## Aisa Pirti:

Aisa, 19, is from Akulivik, Nunavik, in northern Quebec. He is a very accomplished Inuit games athlete, enjoys being on the tundra and speaks fluent Inuktitut, French and English.

He started competing in Inuit games when he was 11 years old. “Just be yourself and play safe to be good” is his message to other athletes. With much practice and persistence, Aisa has received 30 medals and five trophies for his accomplishments in regional and circumpolar competitions, like the Eastern Arctic Summer Games and the Arctic Winter Games.

Aisa also recognizes the importance of Elders to his culture and community and helps them whenever he can. He loves meeting new people and travelling to new places. This fall, Aisa will be attending a post-secondary school in Montreal, Quebec.”



## Megan Pizzo-Lyall:



Megan, 18, is from Taloyoak, Nunavut, and has demonstrated strong leadership skills early in life. At age 11, she volunteered with the Taloyoak Youth and Elders Committee to organize a camping trip to learn more about the Inuit traditional way of life.

At 13, Megan joined her school's student council as the secretary-treasurer and later became president. Megan has been involved in HIV/AIDS awareness events, the Students on Ice Expedition, the Ikaluktutiak Youth Group and the Kitikmeot Regional Youth Council. Her interests expanded to national Inuit issues and in 2005 she joined the National Inuit Youth Council (NIYC) in the role of vice president. Through the NIYC, she has participated at national and international conferences on issues affecting Inuit. "Life is too short to do nothing," she says. "You need to embrace life and use the spirit you were given."

## Christine Smith:

Born in British Columbia, Christine is a proud Métis now living in Wabowden, Manitoba. She was part of the Lieutenant Governors Youth Experience Program, which helps many Manitoba youth through their high school studies with a variety of incentives.



With her strong desire to help those in need and keep her community safe, Christine has been working as an Emergency Medical Responder with the local paramedics. "Make dreams and always stick to them, and be proud of who you are," is how 19-year-old Christine encourages other Aboriginal youth.

Since Christine was nine years old, she has dreamed of becoming a regular member of the RCMP. This fall she will be an auxiliary member of the RCMP, volunteering her time to accompany regular members on patrol.

## Derek Sanderson:

"Through effort and determination, success can be achieved." That is how Derek, a Métis living in Winnipeg, is reaching his goals. At 17, he has found a way to balance his school work, a job and participation on different sports teams. He was recently selected to play as starting tight-end for his high school football team, the Kildonan Eastside Eagles. Derek also loves to play on his school's baseball and hockey teams. High school has been challenging academically, but Derek has responded to the challenge. His dedication to being the best student he can be has seen him achieve an above-80 average in his school work.



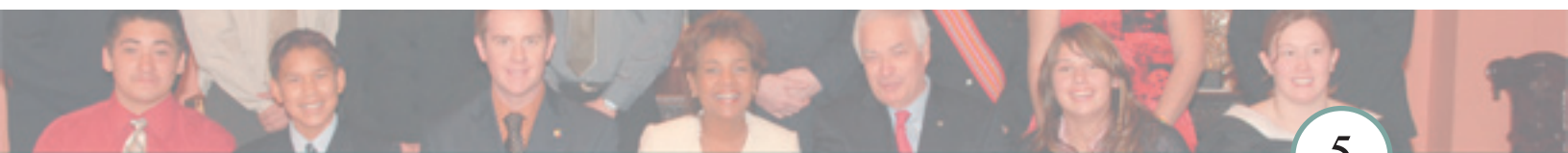
Since 2002, Derek has volunteered with many different groups, including the North American Indigenous Games, the Rotary Club of Winnipeg, Back to Batoche Days and the Aboriginal Musicians Association.

## Caitlin Tolley:

Caitlin is a 15-year-old high school student from Kitigan Zibi Anishnabeg in Quebec and is focused on a bright future. She speaks fluent Algonquin and is a jingle dress dancer. Caitlin learned about her Algonquin culture from her grandparents.

Due to her academic achievements, contributions to her community and her leadership qualities, Caitlin was recognized by the Foundation for the Advancement of Aboriginal Youth. Caitlin also participated in the Forum for Young Canadians on Parliament Hill. She was especially proud to represent the Aboriginal people of Quebec at the Canada Wide Science Fair in Saguenay, Quebec.

Caitlin's extra time is devoted to volunteer work, hockey and her rock band, which is called House Band. Caitlin encourages youth to "learn today and lead tomorrow."





Alisa Blake and Governor General Michaëlle Jean.



Caitlin Tolley gives a speech at the Rideau Hall ceremony.



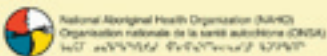
2006-07 National Aboriginal Role Models ceremony at Rideau Hall October 16, 2006.



"I've never had an experience like it. It was exciting!"  
Aisa Pirti,  
19, of Akulivik,  
Nunavik.

## LEAD YOUR way!

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL  
**Role Model**  
PROGRAM



National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO)  
Organisation nationale de la santé autochtone (ONSA)  
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**If you would like to have one of the role models visit your community, please contact the coordinator of the National Aboriginal Role Model Program:**

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