



Ermineskin Newsletter November 26, 2025

Neyâskweyâhk Acimowin Iyikopiwiwîsim Nîstanaw Nikotwâsosâp

ΔΑΔΑΔ·ΑΡ^ε Θ^ηΣΕ° ΣΔΣ·Α^ι

Rise and Recognize! Celebrating the 2025 Okimaw Awards Recipients



Nov. 15, 2025: Four of our Maskwacis Nâpêwak were honored !

Their strength is quiet, their impact is loud. Their dedication is rooted in the past, and their vision is building the future.

They are among those who are the recipients of the 2025 Okimaw Awards!

These are the men who don't just walk in their communities—they kneel down to lift others up. They are the culture-keepers, the youth mentors, the quiet volunteers, and the visionary leaders. They embody the Seven Sacred Teachings in action, showing us what it means to lead with courage, wisdom, and a humble heart.

On this day let's celebrate their stories. Let's honor their journeys. Let's be inspired by their light.

- Service and Public Safety - Lambert Fox
- Cultural Revitalization - Ryan Arcand
- Jimmy Herman Creative Arts - Conway Kootenay
- Shane Yellowbird Music - Armond Duck Chief
- Business Leader - Justin Gladue
- Human Rights and Advocacy - Tom Hunter

- **Youth Leadership - Talon Giroux**
- **Father Figure - Sonny Lightning**
- Mike Gladue - Wounded Warrior - Pablo Vasconez
- **Lifetime Journey Award - Marvin C. Littlechild**
- 7 Teachings:
- Humility - Neil Makokis
- Honesty - Aaron Paquette
- Respect - Marcus Cruz
- **Courage - Kurt Lightning**
- Wisdom - Russell Auger
- Truth - Daniel Poitras
- Love - Blair Gladue
- Honorary Love - Chase Goulet-Pantherbone

“Our young people are strong, but we face many barriers in education and opportunity, and in being understood these barriers are not our fault and they’re not ours to carry alone. We need systems to change, doors to open, and space to be made for us to succeed. We are learning to stand strong in who we are, while ... *cont’d*

carrying our traditional ways of knowing and integrating the western education system. **We work hard for where we are going and our ancestors guide us in our skills, today, to build, to help us create a stronger future. Thank you for believing in our young Indigenous leaders.** This award is for my family, my community and for all the youth, walking proudly in both worlds, thank you.” Talon Giroux, awarded for Youth Leadership.



Talon Giroux, and family.

“I am so proud of all our warriors who received recognition for what they do best... leaders, modern day warriors, great dads and role models in many fields! Congratulations my husband Marvin and thanks to all friends and family who came to witness this event “ Patricia I. Goodwill-Littlechild, her husband Marvin Littlechild received the Lifetime Journey Award.

“Wow this is amazing. It’s pretty incredible. I look in the last 10 years even, the acknowledgement the courage the understanding that we have things that we need in place to support us and **it’s amazing to see these awards today the Okimaw awards being presented and for me to stand shoulder and shoulder amongst all these Amazing gentlemen and their accolades and achievements that they made. Thank you.”** Sonny Lightning, Father Figure Award recipient.

“Thank you to the amazing organizers who put together this incredible event, and congratulations to all those honoured today. **Your tremendous work not only uplifts our Indigenous communities but also lifts all of us up and helps create a better City**

for everyone. “ Aaron Paquette Edmonton MLA City



Sonny Lightning, - Father Figure

Councillor, award recipient for Honesty.

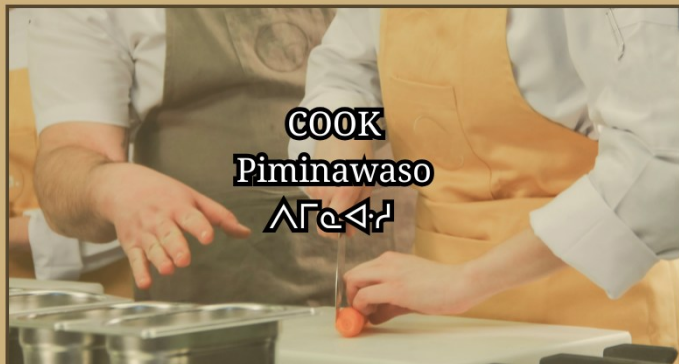
“A heart Full of Gratitude, another year, another powerful and beautiful celebration of our Indigenous Men across Treaty 6, 7, and 8 has come to a close. I am filled with so much gratitude and am truly humbled by the success of this year's event. **To witness our men being uplifted, honored, and celebrated in such a profound way was an overwhelming and heartwarming experience. It is a reminder of the strength and spirit that defines our communities.** None of this would be possible without the incredible support of so many:

· To our Elders, your guidance, prayers, and unwavering knowledge light our path. Thank you for grounding us in our traditions. With a humble and grateful heart, Naa'toh'kiayo'aakii” Janice Randhile, Founder.

Article and Photos by: Tara Cutarm



CREE CORNER



COOK
Piminawaso
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EAT
Mítiso
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DRINK
Miníkwe
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WORK
Atoskê
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Reminder

NEXT ISSUE:

DECEMBER 16, 2025

SUBMISSION DEADLINE:

DECEMBER 11, 2025

kayla@erminekin.ca



Neyaskweyahk Human Services

**ERMINEKIN
NHS ISSUANCE FOR
DECEMBER 2025**

NOVEMBER 27TH, 2025

10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

@THE NHS BUILDING

Please ensure your utility bills are up-to-date, and that your 30-day bank statements have been submitted.

Issuance will be one day only
Personal pickup only
No Mailouts

Thank you for your cooperation

NEYASKWEYAHK HUMAN SERVICES:
(780) 585-3835

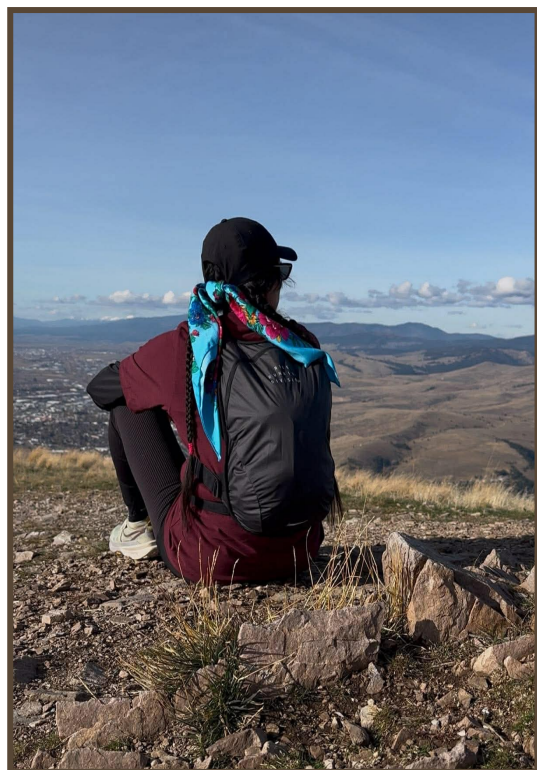
Running Toward the Good Life

Every community has people whose stories spark hope people who remind us that healing, discipline, and prayer can shape a powerful life. One of those people is **Lenise Omeasoo**, a 33-year-old bead artist, mother, wife, and long-distance runner who has created a life rooted in land, movement, and self-belief.

Originally from Blackfeet territory and now living on the **Flathead Reservation in Montana**, Lenise shares her journey openly, carrying her people, her daughters, and her prayers with every mile she runs. **“The land feeds my prayers and then inspires my artwork,”** she says. **“It’s beautiful, this cycle I’ve created for my mental health and work life.”**

Her story is not only her own, but it’s also a reflection of the strength within Indigenous communities everywhere, including Maskwacis. It speaks to the medicine found in land, culture, and self-love.

For Lenise, running is not a hobby. It is a calling—one passed down through her family and deeply connected to identity. **“I come from a running family, I’ve always had this running medicine within me,”** she explains. As a teenager, she ran for family and for her mother. But in adulthood, running has transformed into something greater.



“As a grown woman in my 30s, it has become a home-coming to me,” she shares. After years away from competitive running, she returned with intention and a deeper connection to her spirit. Her marathon training has made her stronger not only physi-



cally but emotionally and spiritually. Long runs became moments of clarity. **“Taking the time to be out on the land and facing myself... has enlightened my thought process. I truly believe in myself and feel stronger.”**

One of her teachings is simple but powerful: **“Go tell the land your dreams and the land will listen.”**

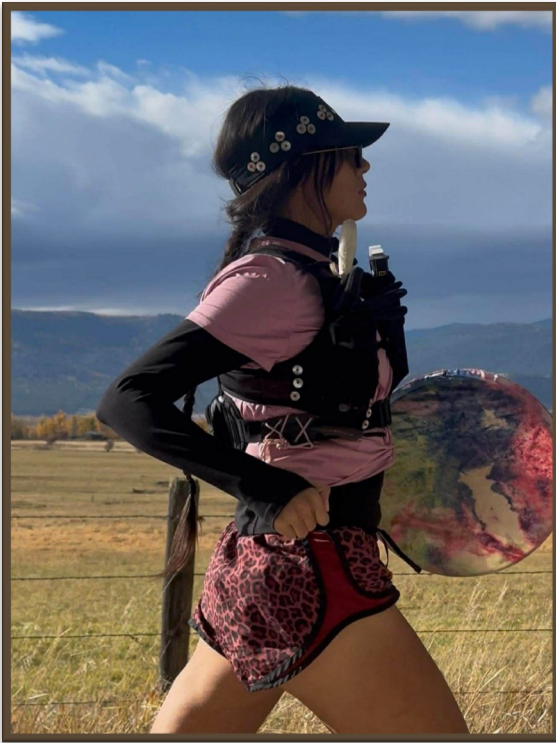
This teaching resonates strongly in communities like Maskwacis, where land-based healing is a foundation of wellness.

When Lenise started posting her running journey online, she didn’t expect it to ripple outward. She didn’t expect to become a source of motivation for countless Indigenous people across Turtle Island. But that’s exactly what happened.

“I think the best opportunity that has risen from my running journey is the amount of Native people that I have inspired,” she says. Many of them, especially Native women, reached out to share that her videos helped them reclaim sobriety, reconnect with movement, or find strength again.

“That is the magic I prayed for.”

Lenise carries her daughters and her community with her on every run. **“I pray to the land. I pray to become strong and powerful for my daughters and community.”** In return, she made a promise: to inspire as many people as she could to rise with her.



Her impact reaches far over **60,000 followers** now support her journey across TikTok and Facebook. This community support has grown into part of her income, allowing her running career to begin funding itself. It is a rare accomplishment, earned through consistency.

As her platform grew, so did her opportunities. Lenise has now collaborated with **Nike twice**, something she once believed was out of reach.

The first collaboration was for the Vomero18 campaign, where she received a pair of shoes that changed her mindset. **“Once I saw that Nike was paying attention to me, I truly started to believe in my dreams.”** Her training sharpened, her pace improved, and she began

to realize she belonged among serious athletes.

The second collaboration was even more meaningful. Nike



flew her to Oregon to film for the **2025 N7 Collection**. **“That experience was magical... It was beautiful working with the Indigenous N7 team. They understood and laughed at my Native jokes. I felt at home with them.”**

Other major brands, such as ASICS and Brooks, offered her ambassador roles, but she politely declined. Her loyalty remains with the one brand that believed in her early: **“I’m fully invested in the Nike lifestyle.”**

Her journey shows young people everywhere, including in Maskwacis, that dreams grow when we nurture them, when we stay committed, and when we trust our path.

Lenise understands the challenges of starting over. Her own journey included sustained effort and deep emotional work. To those struggling to live a healthier life, she offers compassionate advice:

“Be kind to yourself. You are choosing to start a new life with new actions and new ways to deal with your trauma.”

She reminds us that healing is not linear, and it is not easy. But gratitude, presence, and self-love create a foundation strong enough to build on. **“This journey is yours and yours alone... You will be the only person that’s gonna get you there.”**

For her, the process took time—two and a half years to lose 60 pounds. Through setbacks and successes, she held on to one key belief: **“Even if you have to try over and over, be proud that you are trying.”**

Her final teaching is one we can all carry: **“Start with self-love—then discipline, accountability, and confidence will follow.”**

Lenise’s journey is a reminder that running is more than movement—it is ceremony, healing, and reclamation. Her story echoes the resilience found in communities like Maskwacis, where cultural strength, love for the land, and belief in one another continue to guide people toward healthier paths.

Her life shows that transformation is possible at any age, in any place, and for any person who dares to believe in themselves. It shows that our ancestors run with us, and our children watch us. And it shows, most importantly, that every step taken with intention becomes medicine.

From the land to the people, from prayer to purpose, Lenise Omeasoo continues to run—not only for herself, but for all of us.

Article by: Kayla Cutarm & Photos provided by: Lenise Omeasoo

Diabetes Awareness Month

Maskwacis Health Services hosted a meaningful Diabetes Education Awareness Gala at the Wetaskiwin Agricultural Society, bringing community members together for an evening of learning, support, and connection. The event featured guest speaker Marisa Cardinal, a proud Dexcom warrior, who offered powerful insights into her journey with Type 2 Diabetes. Her story helped illuminate the broader challenges faced by Indigenous communities, not only for those living with diabetes but also for the caregivers and loved ones who walk alongside them. The gathering served as a reminder of the importance of raising awareness, amplifying Indigenous voices, and addressing systemic barriers as we work collectively toward healthier futures rooted in culture, community, and healing.

Every November, communities across Canada celebrate Diabetes Awareness Month, a time dedicated to education, support, and raising awareness about a condition that touches many families and First Nation's communities. For Indigenous peoples in Alberta, including the four Nations of Maskwacis, diabetes is not just a medical issue. It is connected to their history, culture, traditional food systems, and healing practices.

Indigenous communities in Alberta experience higher rates of diabetes compared to the general population

What Is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a condition where the body struggles to manage blood sugar (glucose) levels. The most prevalent type affecting Indigenous communities is Type 2 diabetes, which occurs when the body cannot effectively use insulin or fails to produce enough of it. Insulin acts like a key, allowing sugar to move from the bloodstream into cells for energy. When this process falters, excess sugar accumulates in the blood, leading to various health complications over time.

Fortunately, many individuals living with diabetes successfully manage their condition through a combination of medication, healthy eating, regular physical activity, access to quality healthcare, and strong community support. Diabetes Awareness Month serves as a reminder that, with the right care and knowledge, individuals can lead healthy, fulfilling lives.

not due to culture or heritage, but as a result of historical trauma, loss of traditional lands and food systems, limited access to healthy foods, and unequal healthcare access. The legacy of residential schools, systemic poverty, and numerous barriers contribute to increased stress levels and reduced resources for achieving wellness.

Before colonization, First Nations communities enjoyed active lifestyles rooted in land-based practices, including hunting, trapping, fishing, gathering, and ceremonies. Traditional foods such as wild meat, berries, and medicinal plants were nutritious and promoted a balanced way of life. The transition to government rations, processed foods, and enforced sedentary habits had a drastic impact on community health. These changes happened rapidly compared to the slow adaptation of the human body, resulting in an increased risk of diabetes.

Understanding this history is vital. Diabetes within Indigenous communities cannot be viewed as a personal failure; rather, it reflects deep structural challenges that communities continuously strive to overcome.

Like many communities across the Prairies, Maskwacis faces higher-than-average rates of diabetes. It's common for families to have multiple relatives living with the disease. Many individuals receive diabetes diagnoses at a younger age than the general population, which can lead to a longer struggle with the disease and increased complications if support is insufficient.



Marisa Cardinal and Elder Rick Lightning



In Maskwacis, healthcare teams consisting of nurses, dietitians, community health representatives, and elders collaborate to provide screenings, educational events and programs, as well as community engagements. Programs that blend modern medical approaches with Cree traditional knowledge—such as land-based healing, circle teachings, and traditional foods—enhance community wellness and reinforce cultural identity.

Many individuals may live for years without realizing they have pre-diabetes or early-stage diabetes. Routine blood tests can uncover changes before symptoms begin to show. Common signs include increased thirst, frequent urination, blurred vision, slow-healing cuts, fatigue, and numbness or tingling in the extremities. However, some individuals experience no symptoms at all.

activity levels, and treatment plans to prevent complications like vision loss, kidney disease, nerve damage, and cardiovascular issues.

For the people of Maskwacis, “wellness” is not just physical health, but also spiritual, emotional, and mental well-being. Cree teachings emphasize the importance of balance, or **miyo-pimâtisiwin**, which translates to “the good life.” By practicing this lifestyle of culture and health education, this balance can significantly enhance the quality of life for those living with diabetes.



Anne Wildcat and Elder Rose Makinaw

Many community members find healing through reconnecting with traditional practices, including:

- ◆ Gathering medicinal plants and learning from knowledge keepers
- ◆ Preparing traditional foods
- ◆ Participating in ceremonies, sweats, and prayer
- ◆ Reestablishing connections with the land

These practices have been shown to reduce stress, enhance mental health, and rejuvenate the spirit, all of which directly impact physical health. Research across Canada indicates that Indigenous-led, culturally grounded wellness programs are among the most effective at improving mental, spiritual and physical health.

Addressing food security and sovereignty is pivotal. Many households in Indigenous communities encounter significant obstacles in accessing affordable, nutritious foods. The high prices and limited availability of healthy options further complicate efforts to maintain a balanced diet, which is essential for managing diabetes and enhancing overall health outcomes.



Marisa Smallboy

Screening is particularly crucial for those with close family members who have already been affected by diabetes. By identifying changes early, individuals can make small but impactful adjustments to their diet,

Article/Photos by: Kayla Cutarm

KRAZY BEAR: THE DRUM THAT CARRIES OUR STORIES IN MASKWACIS

In Maskwacis, Alberta, the drum group Krazy Bear has emerged as a powerful symbol of cultural pride, perseverance, and achievement. Far more than just a community drum circle, Krazy Bear competes at distinguished powwows and events, bringing recognition that uplifts not only their members but the whole community as well.

One of their standout achievements took place at the **San Manuel Pow Wow** from September 15–17, 2023, where the Krazy Bear Youth Drum group claimed the champion title in their category. This victory for Ermineskin Cree Nation exhibits the strength and talent of our young singers and drummers. They embody a perfect blend of discipline, creativity, and respect for tradition while also engaging with the wider powwow circuit.

This competitive success isn't simply about taking home a trophy; it serves as a powerful affirmation of potential. When our youth win championship titles, they demonstrate that Maskwacis is a place of excellence where culture and ambition go hand in hand. For them, the drum isn't just a drum; it's a vital connection between generations and between life on the reserve and the broader powwow community.

The achievements of Krazy Bear remind us all that our songs matter, our traditions hold value, and our young people can shine on any stage. Their victory echoes throughout Maskwacis, resonating in our homes, schools, and community gatherings, reminding us that we are capable, proud, and strong.



Top row left to right: Costin Saskatchewan, Nathaneal Green, Jerome Montour, Councillor Izaiah Swampy—Omeasoo SCN, Councillor Treyvon Pipestem MFN. Bottom row left to right: Peter Larocque Jr., Pierson Larocque, Ryan Deschamps, Gabe Deschamps

To the members of Krazy Bear, especially the youth: your dedication, hard work, and passion set an inspiring example for everyone. Thank you for honouring the drum, lifting our voices, and sharing your light. As you continue to compete, sing, and drum, may your victories carry not just rewards but also wisdom, pride, and hope for the future.

May your songs resonate not just in powwow arenas but also in the hearts of everyone in Maskwacis, as strength and culture continue to guide us forward.

Article by: Kayla Cutarm

Photo provided by: Izaiah Swampy-Omeasoo

Job Opportunities/Community Events



**KANAWEMAHWASOWIN
KAMIK PRESENTS**

WINTER CLOTHING GIVEAWAY






For REGISTERED ECN Children 0-17 only

**Pick up at Alec Rain Building
For applications received by
KKI by November 15
December 8 - 12, 2025
9:00AM - 3:00PM**

CONTACT:
TAMARAH BROWN
TAMARAH.B@KKAMIK.COM
PATTY WILDCAT
PATRICIA.W@KKAMIK.COM

1-780-585-3721
www.kkamik.com/forms


**Parent/Guardian must bring a
VALID ID and their
CHILD/CHILDREN to pick up items**

Ermineskin Christmas Dinner

**December 19th 2025
@ NOK Building
Doors open @ 5:30pm
Dinner & Live Band**

**Limited Seats
Available**



EIRD CHRISTMAS HAMPERS

**HAMPERS ARE TO BE
DISTRIBUTED TO ERMINESKIN
MEMBERS ON AND OFF RESERVE
FROM DECEMBER 1ST TO DECEMBER
17TH MONDAY-FRIDAY FROM 11AM
TO 6PM AT THE PANEE AGRIPLEX**

**HAMPERS ARE ONE PER HOUSEHOLD.
PLEASE PROVIDE PROOF OF
RESIDENCE UPON PICK UP. PHONE
CALLS ARE NOT ACCEPTED IF
ACCEPTING A HAMPER ON ANOTHER'S
BEHALF. PLEASE BRING A NOTE WITH
PROOF OF RESIDENCE OR TEXTS WITH
A PICTURE OF THEIR ID**

*We thank you for your
patience and understanding.*

Ermineskin Elders Ctr. CHRISTMAS DINNER

**We would like to invite all ermineskin
elders to pe mitso ekwa pe kiyoke**

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16TH
11:30-3:00
Located at Ermineskin
elders ctr.**

**If Needing Transportation, Please Call:
780-585-3435**



MCHS Travel Club Christmas Toy Bingo!

Where? Maskwacis Cree High School Gym

When? December 12, 2025

Doors open @ 5pm and Games start @ 6pm

****Presale tickets only \$35**

\$40 at the door!**

Great prizes for children aged 6-17!
All children must be accompanied by
someone over the age of 14.
No children under 6 please!

Concession on-site with
taco-in-a-bag,
great snacks and drinks!

Bonanza Prize?

Of course! A Playstation 5!

Special Series Prize?

A Nintendo Switch Lite Bundle!



50/50 draw!



All funds raised will support
the MCHS Travel Club
Trip to Europe!

For more information and to purchase tickets,
please contact Jennifer Conroy at 780-585-4449

Ermineskin Health & Wellness

Ermineskin Gift Baskets

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2025

For ECN children ages 0-17
Applications available for Pick Up at the Health and Wellness
Office – Jim Rattlesnake Building
Present Pick Up from 11AM – 5 PM
Present Pick Up Location: Jim Rattlesnake Building

FOR MORE INFO CONTACT
ECN HEALTH & WELLNESS AT (780)585-2000

Barff

Deadline For Applications: December 18th

Ermineskin Health & Wellness and Kanawemahwasowin Kamik Present

Youth Ski Trip

December 27 - 30th, 2025 at Sunshine Ski Village

**ECN
YOUTH
ONLY**

Youth must be willing
to participate & Ski

- ✓ Ages 12 and Up
- ✓ Learn how to Ski
- ✓ First (40) Youth to Apply
- ✓ Includes: lessons, ski packages, rentals and lodging!
- ✓ Trip offered to youth who DID NOT attend the Idaho Trip



*Subject to Change

To Register Contact ECN Health & Wellness at: (780)585-2000



L'ab-ŋ' 4D'9A-bŋ'

Employment Readiness Session

December 1st to 12th 2025
10 AM to 3 PM Daily

Deadline to apply: November 27th 2025

 Maskwacis Employment Center Classroom

Requirements:

- Minimum 18 years of age
- Currently unemployed or underemployed
- Sporadic or no work history
- Need assistance finding employment
- Must be motivated to work
- Must have own working email
- Must commit to entirety of program
- Must have own transportation

Program Highlights:

Career Development:

- Resumes
- Cover Letter Writing

Personal Development:

- Public Speaking
- Team building

Professional Development:

- Job seeking
- Safety ticket training

How to Apply:
Send request by email to Karla@maskwacisemployment.ca
Or Call (780) 585-4450



12 Days of Christmas

\$10 can win you one of the following:

- 1- Night stay at Fantasyland Hotel
- Flat Screen TV
- Cell phone w/ case
- Oilers Tickets
- Men's Basket
- Women's Basket
- Men's Ribbon Shirt & Beaded Item
- Women's Ribbon Skirt & Beaded Item
- Date Night Basket
- Games Basket
- Taste of Maskwacis
- MCC Merch Basket

With a \$10 ticket purchase, you can look forward to:

- 12 chances to win
- 12 amazing prizes
- 12 daily draws
- Draw begins on December 1st
- Daily draws will be done LIVE on MCC's Facebook page
- You do not have to be present to win

\$10 TICKET

To get your lucky ticket, purchase from one of our MCC team members or come visit us at MCC!

Maskwacis Cultural College
Crane's Rd (old KCWS building)
780-585-5925 info@mccedu.ca



Adopt-a-Elder For Christmas

spread holiday cheer by adopting a local elder for Christmas

How it works:

Drop by the Ermineskin elders center to pick up a list or email eldersliaison@erminekskin.ca to receive a list by email. Shop and return items by December 15th to the elders center

For more information call 780-585-3435 or email eldersliaison@erminekskin.ca



Ermineskin Elders Ctr. CHRISTMAS DINNER

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16TH
11:30-3:00
Located at Ermineskin elders ctr.

We Are Calling out to all Volunteers, Individuals' with Valid Food Safe who are willing to Cook and Serve our Elders.

For more information, Please Call: 780-585-3435



Reindeer Lane
HOLIDAY LIGHTS DRIVE THRU

DECEMBER 14, 15, & 16 2025
MASKWACIS BEAR PARK
6:00PM - 8:00PM

Holiday Lights, Fireworks, Candy Bags
First 300 will Receive Christmas Treats

ERMINESKIN HEALTH AND WELLNESS 780-585-2000

In Partnership with:
Ermineskin Recreation
Integrated Family Services
LB Health and Wellness
Ermineskin Health & Wellness
Samson Sports & Youth Development



SANTA'S WORKSHOP PARADE

TIMELINE:
4:00 PM - REGISTRATION
4:30PM - JUDGING
5:00PM - PARADE STARTS

Vehicle Categories:
1. Family
2. Commercial
3. First Nation Department

Prizes Awarded
FOR EACH CATEGORY
1st - \$600
2nd - \$400
3rd - \$300
4th - \$200

DECEMBER 15, 2025 AT SAMSON BINGO HALL
FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: ERMINESKIN HEALTH AND WELLNESS 780-585-2000

In Partnership with:
Ermineskin Events
Ermineskin Recreation
Integrated Family Services
Ermineskin Health & Wellness
Louis Bull Health & Wellness
Samson Sports & Youth Development