

# SHE SHOOTS...AND SCORES!!!



Archer Waasayah holding her medal and taking aim. Photos submitted.

Interview by Ella Robinson of Nelson and article by Ava Campbell-Wall of Beasley, age 15

Teen archery aficionado Waasayah Munro-Soldier has her sights set on the target - and beyond. The Swan Lake First Nation member was named Archery Manitoba’s 2021 3D Female Archer of the Year, and she’s already training for the 2023 North American Indigenous Games (NAIG), as well as the 2025 World Archery Youth Championships.

Hailing from Winnipeg, Waasayah began taking lessons at only ten years old, quickly becoming a skilled archer with her competitive spirit, hard work, and passion for representing Indigenous people on the field. She is the only female archer on her team, as well as being the only female Indigenous archer in Manitoba. “In my community we don’t do archery,

not very much,” she confides in an interview with one of KTN’s reporters. “But... I was learning [that] Yukon is big in archery. They’re gonna come to NAIG 2023. When I heard that I was kind of nervous!”

She’s the only member of her community to be going to NAIG for archery, but there’s two more young people attending the games for other sports. Waasayah has been training two or three times a week at the archery facility she goes to in Winnipeg in preparation for the games, which will be hosted this July in Halifax. When she’s not holding a bow and arrow she’s talking about archery with her peers and coaches. “[My friends] like to

say, oh, Waasayah’s a celebrity, she’s going to be famous,” she says with a laugh.

Connecting with her Indigenous ancestors and culture is another thing Waasayah holds dear to her heart. Initially her interest sparked because she wanted to be a hunter-gatherer, says her dad, Reil Munro, in an interview with CBC last year. She sports a beaded quiver when participating in tournaments and feels a connection to her ancestors, using the same tools they did today. Waasayah’s love for archery only grows, and at just age fourteen, she’s already a massively accomplished archer with more success to come.

## POETRY CORNER

Poem by Olivia Hahn of Saanich, age 17

Olivia wrote a book about grief after the loss of her mother. Her book is currently being sold by Amazon. Stay tuned for the next issue of KTN where we interview Olivia!

Poem: Grief is a Gunshot

Losing you feels like being shot by a gun, it left a hole and marked its spot.  
Losing you feels like my world just stopped and my stomach is constantly filled with knots.  
Losing you feels like I can no longer see you which makes it hard to continue to feel you.  
Grief feels sad and lonely and sometimes happy but deep down there is this loss that deepens the more I think of you.  
Grief feels like I am stuck between the past and the future.  
I am stuck in the time I had to see you suffer but am forced to move on quicker than ever.  
I put on a fake smile and cover up my pain because I think it’s easier to make myself look brave.  
I lost you and you will never come back but once I close my eyes I feel your arm around my back.  
I am sick of hearing the sorry and how can I help you.  
All I wish you could do is be here for me to talk to.  
Losing you feels like being shot by a gun, it left a hole and marked its spot but no matter how much time will pass, I will forever and always miss you.



Olivia Hahn holding the book she wrote out of the depth of her experience to help those who are grieving. Photo submitted.



# DIVERSABILITIES IN ACTION

**By Alexis Folk and Hazel Raine of Creston investigate what life is like for a Kootenay teen with disabilities.**



**Defying expectations: Alexis and her dad wakeboarding. Photo submitted.**

My name is Alexis Folk. I’m fifteen years old and live in a small town in BC. For all my life I’ve had cerebral palsy, and I wanted to share my experiences from this disability in the hopes that it will show people a different perspective on viewing the world.

I was born three months early, which meant I had to be put on oxygen for preventive reasons. But the staff took me off oxygen too soon, which resulted in my family and I having to adapt to life with a physical disability called cerebral palsy.

Cerebral palsy (CP) is basically brain damage that occurs during birth. It often affects things like movement of legs, hands, and fingers; speech; vision; and thinking/cognition. Since it can affect any part of the brain, everyone who has cerebral palsy is affected in a different way. For me, my gross motor, fine motor and my vision are mainly affected.

I know that one of the most important ways of dealing with cerebral palsy is to have a positive

attitude. Before I started school, my perspective on living with cerebral palsy was a lot less positive until horses became a huge part of my life when I was introduced to therapeutic horse riding.

It wasn’t until between 7th to 9th grade that I started to really learn the strong lesson that when it comes to your own personal misfortune, keeping a positive attitude is the best way to deal with it. Everyone has their own issues and rising above them is always the way to go.

*“Some able-bodied people do not understand what life with diverse needs entails.”*

Some able-bodied people do not understand what life with diverse needs entails. People sometimes place their own beliefs or stigmas about what people with disabilities are capable of mentally- and mobility-wise. I highly encourage able-bodied people to look at all people with the same amount of respect.

Many people ask me how they can help out with my disability, and I am grateful for that. Sometimes people are not aware of my barriers, but when they understand more about me, they are more than happy to assist in all possible ways.

One way that I try to help not only myself but other people with disabilities is writing letters that share my challenges and advocate for a more accessible world.

I really want to strongly encourage people to believe in their best version of themselves. For me, quite often just waking up is a challenge, physically speaking. But I always try to put my best foot forward. From experience I find it’s still difficult to function living with cerebral palsy; but if I rise with a purpose, passion, goal, or smile, it’s a bit easier.

*“I always try to put my best foot forward. From experience I find it’s still difficult to function living with cerebral palsy; but if I rise with a purpose, passion, goal or smile, it’s a bit easier.”*

Sometimes people will ask me about the words to use when speaking about people with disabilities. I personally appreciate when people use a person’s name first, putting my name before the disability. For example: Alexis Folk is disabled rather than disabled Alexis.

Some people, though, appreciate having what is called identity-first language where the disability comes before the person; like autistic Peter rather than Peter has autism. This is because they feel their disability is part of them and they should celebrate it. My advice is to always ask people their preference about what kind of language to use. Also, please don’t use words like the r-word, crippled, handicapped, or gimp to describe people with disabilities, as they are very hurtful references.

All that being said, people very commonly underestimate the cognitive and mighty abilities of all people with disabilities. One of the purposes of this article is to oppose that underestimation with sharing stories from voices that aren’t often heard.

To share another perspective for this piece, I interviewed Bee, a Nelson college student who also deals with living with disabilities daily. Bee doesn’t have an official diagnosis for their disability, which makes coping with their chronic pain an even more difficult process; they’ve been told that

there’s “probably something wrong” by doctors for around five years without further details.

*“It’s like a buy-one, get twenty-four free deal, except you didn’t buy the first one and don’t want any of them.”*

Bee’s disability is likely a type of connective tissue disorder, which affects their body in many different ways. “It’s like a buy-one, get-twenty-four-free deal, except you didn’t buy the first one and you don’t want any of them,” Bee laughed while describing their disability. They began using mobility aids in the tenth grade, including crutches and then a cane, which they still use now. “I had been experiencing chronic pain for most of my life, but I didn’t realize what was happening until five years ago,” Bee said in the interview.

The mobility aids brought attention to Bee’s otherwise unnoticeable disability, which led to cases of verbal bullying in high school. “Being in high school surrounded by people who knew me before using mobility aids led to a lot of awful things being said to me,” they mentioned. “It fueled my fire of wanting to advocate for disability[-related] stuff...It is amazing [to witness] the audacity that some high-schoolers have.”

Theatre has been a large part of Bee’s life, and they have been involved with several different theater camps and groups over their life. One of the productions they were involved in was Newsies, a show that was presented in Nelson this last summer at the Capitol Theatre.

Not all theatre productions are open to casting people with disabilities, however. Around the time that Bee began using mobility aids, they auditioned for a show and didn’t get a role. “It was very pointedly because [of my mobility aids]...It wasn’t explicitly stated, but it was pretty clear that was the reason I didn’t get cast. That made me lose a lot of interest in this thing that I really, really loved.”

*“This made me lose a lot of interest in this thing that I really, really loved.”*

But not all instances are like that. When asked if the Newsies production was accommodating, Bee replied, “Newsies was probably one of the best experiences I’ve ever had in my life in relation to my disability, because everybody was so understanding and so accommodating, and making sure that I was taking breaks and not overworking myself.”

Bee also said that the director and stage manager approached them before rehearsals to ask what they would need in terms of disability; “The best part of it was that [the director and stage manager] had ideas before they came to me to ask; they weren’t just expecting me to come up with all the solutions for my own disability, which is something [I’ve dealt] with a lot.”

The summer youth theater program is now creating a new system to ensure accessibility for all in future years. “It was absolutely phenomenal,” Bee added. “It was my favorite theater experience I’ve ever had.”

*“Inside we’re ultimately all human.”*

Disabilities are so diverse, and no two people are affected the same way by one. It’s essential to keep in mind that people living with disabilities are just as important to include in life as able-bodied people: we may look and act differently, but inside we’re ultimately all human.



# BLACK AND RURAL NEWSPAPER INTERNSHIP

**Kootenay Teen News embarked on it’s first internship! The newspaper hired two Kootenay youth this winter thanks to the Columbia Basin Trust. Shayna Jones, a Kaslo-based, award-winning performance artist specializing in oral storytelling of African and Afro-Diasporic Folklore, mentored Mariah and Nyah through an exploration and reflection process centered on the stories of Black life in the Kootenays. At the end of their time together, they wrote these reflections. The second round of the internship starts next month with two new students – stay tuned to our next issue for their contributions!**

*Nyah Kennay of Nakusp, age 14*

My entire childhood in this town was relatively peaceful, except for the occasional stranger going up to me and touching my hair. I always hated that. I am not a doll or something on display that you can just grab; I am human too.

I want to be treated like everyone else is. By everyone I mean the causal white person. My mom always taught me to be proud of my hair and that being unique is a good thing, but I never saw it that way. Whenever we’d have discussions about our heritage and ancestry in class, I didn’t even know what my ethnicity was, never mind my culture. Because I am Black, I am “obliged” to know everything about my culture by a certain age or I wouldn’t be considered Black.

I’d even get asked as a child, “what are your culture foods Nyah? What’s your heritage?” and my only response was I don’t know. I would just say I’m half-Black and half-white, as if that’s not already obvious to everyone that sees me. Fortunately, now in my older stages I do know the names and the origins of some, but I still have yet to even try them. As well, I don’t know how to properly eat them because that is not offered where I live. The only dining cuisine in my town is restaurant fast food, alcohol or slimy “high quality shrimp and clams.” Me not knowing much about myself because of this town has led me to always wonder where I fit in society and where I stand.

I’m not Black enough to complain about my problems and my skin, but I’m not white enough either to have privilege. Where do I go?



**Photos submitted. Nyah above and one of Nyah’s photographs below of Nakusp.**



*Mariah Thompspon of Castlegar, age 17*

**Q: From your experience growing up rurally, what would your advice be to your younger self?**

A: I would advise my younger self to be more careful with who you surround yourself with because they might portray their insecurities on you. Meaning they bully you for your skin colour but they suntan to get darker. Don’t be afraid to express and stand up for yourself because people will take you as a pushover and stereotype you. Be yourself and know your worth. Dress according to your style, don’t try to dress to fit in. Friends aren’t an option if they don’t accept you for your skin colour, style and personality. Racism is everywhere but that doesn’t mean you should let anyone be racist to you.

**Q: What was your experience of the internship?**

A: The internship helped me reflect on who I am as a person. Meaning it helps me see that I have no connection to land, ancestors or even my skin colour. Before I moved to Canada I wasn’t really paying attention to any of those. I love my skin colour but it wasn’t an issue for me to actually be like I’m Black so people are going to be racist to me. Now I feel the need to get connected with those. The internship was a great experience for me. It was so easy to express to Shayna. She gave me a sense of belonging because she understands what it takes to be Black and rural.

*Curious to learn more about what it is like to be both Black and rural? Check out [blackandrural.com](http://blackandrural.com) for more stories! Through it, Shayna Jones aims to seek out, honour, and theatrically showcase stories from rurally based Blacks (like herself) to nuance and challenge the monolith of what matters to Black Lives.*

# DEBATING BEHIND THE SCENES

**by Emma Ford of Trail, Gr. 10 Debater**



For the past three years, I have been able to debate competitively and through my regional selections, I was able to go to the Provincial Debating Championships not once, not twice, but three times. So what happens in preparation of the event?

I did a lot to get ready for the Law Foundation Cup Provincial Debating Championship. We are

given a legal topic one month ahead of time to become familiar with. I researched for hours at a time to look for evidence that supported and was against the topic, “Be it resolved that the sentencing of criminals take the socio-economic background of the offender into account”.

In deciding which points to find background information on, I brainstormed with my debate partner and gathered information at our school club meetings. My partner and I decided on which specific points to work on and then went on our own after that. I looked at a number of law websites including the Department of Justice, Canada and the John Howard Society of Canada. I used statistics from both websites to substantiate my points.

After doing extensive research, I wrote both of my speeches and practiced them. I include a hook at the beginning followed by a refutation. (A refutation takes your opponent’s ideas and proves why they are wrong in order to take them down.) I then discuss my contentions and finish with a summary of what I talked about. Simultaneously, I also time them to make sure that I was meeting the 8 minute speech time which is the senior allotment of time.

You have to communicate with your partner

during the writing process to make sure that you are both on the same page of what you are talking about. I try to avoid writing for the wrong side or accidentally contradicting my own points. As well, I try to make sure I don’t duplicate my partner’s points. In a debate you have to make different contentions for each person and not repeat the same ideas. Obviously during a summary it is okay to review your partner’s points but you want to stick to your own case line.

After that process, I brainstormed strong questions that I could ask my opponents during the three minute cross examination period. I look at the statistics and see if I can mold them into a question or line of questioning. I follow up with additional ideas depending on the answers that I get back

That being said, in order to succeed at debate tournaments, persuasion is key. A main strategy that helped me learn to be a persuasive speaker is learning to be more confident, even if I felt like I had no idea what I was talking about. By forcing yourself to be confident, it makes your arguments sound more convincing to people around you. Being able to represent my region at Debate Provincials was a great experience. I had the opportunity to go against other debaters, have engaging debate rounds, and improve my debate skills along the way.



STREET TALK

KTN correspondent Ashleigh Germaine of Nelson, age 15, asked students at Trafalgar Middle School: What did you do for Spring Break?



“I went to Thunder Bay for Cross Country skiing Nationals and it was really fun. Then I went to BC Games in Vernon for Cross Country skiing. Also I went downhill skiing at Whitewater lots.”  
~Aleah, 14



“I had a nice vacation to Mexico with my family; it was really fun. I played some tennis, read some books, watched some movies and had nice outdoor time.”  
~Katherine, 14

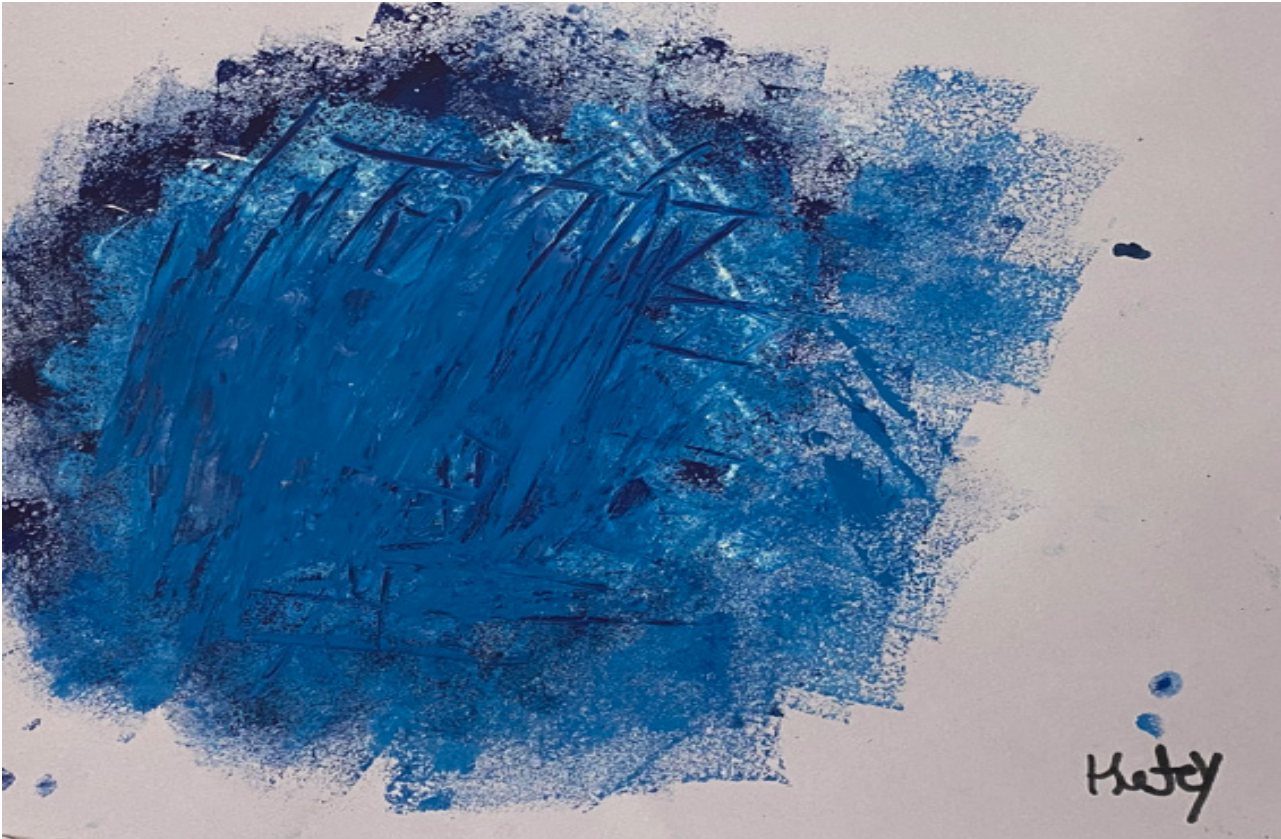


“My parents surprised me and my brother with a trip to Portland to see a Chicago Bulls game, which was pretty cool. I also did some skiing.”  
~Jane, 14



“I went to Vancouver with my dad to visit my family. I visited a cat cafe, lots of bookstores and UBC. I also went skiing and celebrated my mom’s birthday.”  
~Ashleigh, 14

Art by Kady of Golden, age 14



Nautralist’s Niche  
by Hazel Raine of Wyndell, age 15



Corvus corax. The common raven is a common sight in the various environs of British Columbia, its smoker’s croak and glossy black feathers conspicuous in ecosystems from cedar forests to grassy wetlands, alpine meadows to icy mountain ranges. Ravens are clever tricksters: shapeshifters, magicians, facetious muses of the sky. Their satirical mockery is a familiar, even comforting, presence among my hikes and wanderings. Mimicking a raven’s voice feels like speaking a rough and ragged language woven through with this bird’s dark magic.

*I’m Hazel, a fifteen-year-old living in Wynndel, BC. My pastimes include doodling on any canvas I can find (including chemistry papers, books, and my hands), writing about the numinous synchronicities of life, listening to music much too loudly, and photographing the natural world. I love cloudy days, cats, and the nighttime.*

BOOK NARRATED BY DEATH

Book Review by Dani Evans of Nelson, age 15

The Book Thief is a historical fiction novel published in 2005 and written by Australian author Markus Zusak.

The story follows the life of Liesel Meminger, a German girl growing up during World War II under the rule of the nazi party.

The story is narrated by a personified death, a character not only with a bold personality and even bolder perspectives, but a fresh view to write and read from.

The story follows Liesel’s life up to the age of fourteen. Living with her foster parents, Hans and Rosa Hubberman, an accordion player and a woman with an ‘iron fist’, becoming best friends with a boy who lives down the street, coming of age during bombings, war drafts, and stealing books from the mayor’s library.

We meet characters like Max Vandenberg, a Jewish man on the run, who finds refuge in the Hubbermans basement and a friendship with Lie-

sel. Max comes to have a persevering, inspiring role in the story- painting us pictures of midnight day-dreams in a basement and the thrill of a warehouse fistfight.

My favorite part of the novel is definitely the writing style. The author keeps you engaged in the story, and the descriptions of colors, scenes and environments flow and weave to paint a picture in a way I’ve never read before.

While reading this book I have laughed, cried and gotten pulled into the life of Liesel Meminger. The cobblestone streets and snowy kitchens, the swirling skies and the whistling of bombs. Its writing is engaging and fun to read, and its story is both encouraging and heartbreaking.

This historical fiction is definitely going on my list of must read books. Books that leave an imprint, change the way you look at the world around you. The Book Thief changed the way I think, the way I see, and the way I write.

KTN NEEDS YOU!

We are looking for stories!  
Something happening in your community that we should know about?  
Contact Editor Melodie Rae at kootenayteennews@gmail.com.  
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