

Bent Arrow Women

Anonymous

In December 15, 2006, the women of Bent Arrow received news that would change our worlds forever. Our friend, leader, mentor, teacher and agency founder passed away very suddenly at the age of 49 years of age from complications from her knee surgery. Her name was Shauna Seneca.

Many people in the community believed that she wasn't just the boss or figurehead of Bent Arrow but WAS Bent Arrow. How would Bent Arrow go on without her?

In the midst of our grief and shock, our women came together. Every year at Christmas we hosted a Community Christmas Dinner that is attended by over 500 friends and Bent Arrow Family. That year, our event was scheduled for December 22nd. I am sure that everyone would have understood if we cancelled that year given the circumstances but when we met to talk about it (only hours after finding out) we decided that we had to go forward with it. Shauna wouldn't want the party cancelled cause of her!

First though, the woman of Bent Arrow had to help plan a celebration of her life. And what a life it was! The Edmonton City Police gave her an honor guard to show the immense amount of respect they had for this woman. Our Mayor, had two minutes of silence in council chambers in her honor. We had to set up a communications centre at Bent Arrow for media to gather and interview people who knew her.

The staff wanted to be a part of the planning and we decided to host the lunch gathering after the funeral. Bent Arrow hosted over 1000 people at our offices after the funeral. We prepared not only our offices for this gathering but also most of the food. And then just 2 days later....we hosted over 500 people for our annual Community Christmas Dinner. It was utterly exhausting work both physically and emotionally.

A dear friend and colleague told me about a year afterwards that he was genuinely concerned about all of us at Bent Arrow and Bent Arrow itself. He could not imagine us going forward. He said he recalled the exact moment he knew in his heart that we would in fact be okay and would move forward. It was at the Community Christmas Dinner. There was genuine happiness and joy there by all the staff who were working hard to provide a festive gathering for our friends and Bent Arrow Family. He saw strength and incredible resilience in the women of Bent Arrow.

And that strength and resilience is still here. We have moved forward. We have even grown! It is a tribute to her memory and her ability as a teacher that we have done so. That and also all the Immense support from the community in those days right after and in the months after we lost her. The women of Bent Arrow inspire me everyday.

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