



Talking Stick is an anonymous chat platform that connects First Nations individuals to culture-based peer support and confidential conversations.

Highlights from this edition

- Talking Stick’s Laurie-Lee Daniels at the World Cup.
- First cohort of SIIT Students complete Talking Stick placements.
- Interview with Indigenous RCMP retiree Karen Pelletier.

Talking Stick at the World Cup

One of Talking Stick’s Peer Advocates had a once-in-a-lifetime experience, as she was given the opportunity to travel to Doha, Qatar to experience the World’s “Most Watched” Sporting Event, the 2022 World Cup.

Laurie-Lee Daniels, of Saskatoon, an avid soccer player left for the international event on November 17 and stayed until December 4. She did not let the extreme heat, or a healing Achilles injury stop her from cheering Canada on and making connections with fans from across the World!

Before she left, Laurie-Lee picked up some Talking Stick swag to sport while she was overseas, and she shared a photo of herself in front of the stadium rocking the TS t-shirt! It turns out that being 13,000 kilometers away from home does not present a barrier to being a dedicated Peer Advocate!



Peer Advocate Laurie-Lee Daniels in Doha, Qatar.

“I did manage to get on a few chats with people - it went great!” said Laurie-Lee. “Being across the world doesn’t affect the app at all. I missed 2 chats, that was only ‘cause I lost wifi but I managed to get 6 chats done here, with the time zone change, it doesn’t matter what time it is there is always someone needing to talk.”

Outstanding work, Laurie-Lee – thanks for being a great ambassador for Canada and for Talking Stick!

SIIT Students Successfully Complete Talking Stick Practicum



Placement students from SIIT marking the successful completion of their Talking Stick practicum.

The first cohort of twelve students from SIIT (Saskatchewan Indigenous Institute of Technologies) – eight 1st year from Saskatoon and four 2nd year from North Battleford – have now completed their practicum placements with Talking Stick. The team is now seeking to engage these youth as Peer Advocates, to allow them to expand their experiences through paid employment.

With the experience of this first group in-hand, the team is now working toward refining the curriculum, developing a more robust evaluation matrix, and working with the three schools – SIIT, First Nations University of Canada, and University of Regina – to make the opportunity available to more students.

What our Placement Students are Saying:

“I have learned it’s okay to be honest with yourself and it’s okay to come from a place of curiosity...I have learned to honor that we are all on our own pathways and just having someone to help us validate what we are going through can be so helpful.”

“...it is always in the back of my head that this conversation could be their first encounter with help of the only chance I have to engage with this person...the goal is to get them to keep coming back and maybe give them the confidence to pursue other avenues of help.”

“This experience has allowed me to grow more as a presenter and also become more aware of my relationships. Awareness of how my past and present relationships impact my life. It is becoming easier to share my story, acknowledge it, and show myself humility and love.”

Karen Pelletier: A Life of Service and Walking the Talk with Determination

From the moment I began speaking with Karen Pelletier, her passion and wisdom burst through. The perspectives she brings to her current role as Director of Child Welfare and Social Development are a culmination of nearly three decades of police work, which has provided her with a unique lens through which she is able to view her current world.

Karen comes from a family that has a long history of service, in policing and in the Canadian Forces. Her 21-year career in the RCMP, where she reached the rank of Sergeant, and another 6 ½ years with the Regina Police Force took her to several detachments across Alberta and Saskatchewan. Karen embraced the platform she was offered as an Indigenous woman in uniform. Much of her career was focused on Indigenous policing and she is proud of her contribution to the development of First Nations youth. Through her work in schools and in the RCMP Community Cadet Corps Program, she was able to “connect with her own People” and to provide a strong, Indigenous role-model – someone who “looked like them.” Karen feels that there needs to be more energy and effort put into highlighting the accomplishments of Saskatchewan’s Indigenous People, and there are many to be celebrated – so that the young people can believe that “She did it, and so can I!”

When it came to Karen’s perspectives on Talking Stick, it was obvious that she saw vast potential for the chat application. We talked about the use of the platform by her staff, Veterans, youth, and she spoke from a place of experience. Karen shared that she downloaded the Talking Stick app and has used it on a number of occasions.

“I don’t rant – I just connect when I need a ‘pick me up’ and I encourage others to do the same,” she said.

She sees the availability of different languages and the ability to control the chat as being particular strengths. She noted that other platforms choose the person on the other end of the chat for you; while Talking Stick provides a photo of the Peer Advocate, so that the guest can be assured that they are speaking to someone who is also Indigenous. This is unique and this assures cultural safety. Karen described the Talking Stick experience as “warm” whereas others seem “cold” because you have no idea who is on the other end of the connection.



In her work, Karen is promoting the use of Talking Stick across all her areas of responsibility. She is encouraging Child Welfare and Social Development staff to use it themselves and to spread the word and “get it out there.”

She knows that the RCMP, schools, and other community organizations are also working to promote Talking Stick as a resource in First Nations communities across the province.

The use of Talking Stick to support veterans struck a particular chord with Karen. Given her family’s commitment to service, she has first-hand experience and stories about the challenges Veterans face in seeking access to critical mental health care. She expressed frustration with the bureaucracy and the stress of being bounced around the system. Veterans are constantly saying, “I served my country – and now I have to PROVE that I need help.” Karen saw great value in promoting the use of Talking Stick to veterans and supported the idea of engaging veterans as Peer Advocates. She again spoke about the importance of being able to choose your Peer Advocate and added that the fact that Talking Stick is always available and is regarded as a culturally safe, anonymous resource would appeal to veterans.

As we wrapped up, Karen said that she is hopeful that Talking Stick will continue to be available and allowed to expand. “It is growing leaps and bounds and needs to be given a chance to spread its wings,” she said.

Karen would also like to see Indigenous “influencers” engaged in promoting Talking Stick, to amplify the message that there is help out there, and Talking Stick is a safe space for sharing. “Peer connections offer hope; and if Talking Stick no longer exists, we are failing our most vulnerable people – youth and Veterans would be hit the hardest.”

Tinikî to Karen for her willingness to share her inspiring story and remarkable experiences!

Need to chat? You Talk. We Listen.

- First Nations Peer Advocates are available now.
- Always Anonymous.
- Confidential. Safe. Secure.
- 1 on 1 private conversations.



Download our free app:
Talking Stick-Indigenous



Or go to our website:
my.talkingstick.app

Thank you to our partners

Talking Stick was created in partnership with Saskatchewan’s Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN), Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), and TryCycle Data Systems.

info@talkingstick.app

