



# 2010 - The Year

## Opening ceremonies unforgettable

This past month, thanks to a recommendation and support by Gabriel Dumont Institute, I had the opportunity to attend the Indigenous Youth Gathering and participate in the opening ceremonies of the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics. I was one of four Métis youth delegates representing the Métis Nation–Saskatchewan and was joined by Daniel Olver, Dallas Fiddler-Boyer, both of Saskatoon, and Kymber Palidwar from Nipawin.

This event was made possible by the Four Host First Nations and the Vancouver Organizing Committee. The Indigenous Youth Gathering brought over 300 Aboriginal youth from across Canada together to share aspects of our cultures through the Olympic movement.

An average day at the Indigenous Youth Gathering was long and jam-packed with a number of events, rehearsals, and activities. However, it wasn't all work and no play. Instead of dreading the boring two hour bus ride back to our accommodations, we held jam sessions. These included Pacific First Nations singing and drumming, Métis fiddling and guitar playing, Prairie First Nations singing and drumming and Inuit throat singing, making our bus rides quite the cultural experience.

None of us will forget the free time where we all got to go shopping in Whistler, the Squamish/ Lil'wat Cultural Center, and downtown Vancouver.

Much of our experiences at Indigenous Youth Gathering were empowering and inspirational, such as the address given by retired track and field athlete Billy Mills. Billy was a gold medalist in the 10,000 metre race of the 1964 Summer

Olympics in Tokyo. He was the first, and only, North-American athlete to ever win this event and one of only a few Aboriginal athletes to have competed in the Olympics. He spoke of the hardships he faced in college and of racism in the sporting world that almost drove him to suicide.

ceremonies.

After two weeks of long rehearsals, we were on the stage for an hour and-a-half, longer than any other performer during the opening ceremonies. If anyone has ever tried to jig that long, they will know that it is very tiring. Performing in



Kymber Palidwar, Daniel Olver, Jenna McLeod, Bekki Wilson and Bradley Brown all participated in the Indigenous Youth Gathering at the Olympics. (Photo supplied by Kymber Palidwar)

The best part about the entire experience was our performance in the Opening Ceremonies. The Vancouver Organizing Committee and the Four Host First Nations agreed that the Indigenous people of Canada should welcome the athletes of the world. Our role in the ceremonies was to be introduced by the Four Host First Nations, perform our cultural dances, welcome the athletes, and be in the mosh pit audience for Bryan Adams and Nelly Furtado. This was the first time an Indigenous group of the host country has been included in the planning and delivery of the opening

front of a stadium filled with 60,000 people and being aired on TV for three and a-half-billion viewers certainly had its motivating factors.

I jiggled with pride hoping that I was making all my family and the Métis community back at home proud. There was a gruelling point in the performance where my calves burned, my feet ached, and I was drenched in sweat. I thought that I needed to slow down, but the possibility of being seen on TV back at home not jiggling my heart out for my nation motivated me to keep on going.

My time in Vancouver has been a life-changing experience. Being able to participate in such an event has been a source of inspiration, and, I hope that all youth go back to their communities as inspired as I am.

- Written by Bradley Brown

### Métis Did you know?

**Did you know? One of the Franklin expeditions travelled through Cumberland House en route to the Arctic?**

**Did you know? Métis women were essential to the bison hunts. They followed in the carts and once the hunter took down a bison he would leave a glove as a marker and the women would take the carcasses and prepare them into pemmican.**



**GABRIEL D**  
of Native Stud