

Grandmother's Teachings

Reawakening Cree culture in Chisasibi

Grandmother's Teachings is a cultural group in Chisasibi assigned the duty of reviving Cree culture.

With the help of his wife Velma, it is the brainchild of late Larry House, well-respected and known throughout Eeyou Istchee and nationally for his cultural work. The group is now run by his daughter, Heather House, organized through Chisasibi Wellness and funded by Health Canada.

The year is organized through an initial fiscal meeting in March to map out the Gookums' plans.

Which demands the question **'where does this knowledge come from?'**

"It comes from our elders"

says Emily Sam who is a co-organizer of the group and has been a part of the journey since the beginning. She says the Grandmothers are not only sustaining, but reviving old Cree traditions and ceremonies.

"From when they've heard or seen their parents or grandparents tell these stories, it is from those teachings that we proceed. Those ceremonies are passed down through our legends."

Examples of their most recent activities are first caribou ceremonies, snowshoe walks and the first moon ceremony. The first moon ceremony was officiated by Chisasibi Gookums Martha Pachano and Jane Matthew. Martha performed the ceremony as it was done for her by her grandmother.

Sam says the drive to keep the initiative going comes from the youth themselves who are hungry for the knowledge. They appreciate the connection to the past and find it empowering and life-changing.

Most recently performed at the begging of June was a traditional baptism. The Gookums' next events are the man's "coming of age" ceremony and different ways of preparing traditional food.





“One of the girls who did the first moon ceremony said ‘I’m so glad I did this. I feel like a princess.’ We need to educate the young people about our ancestors and traditions that existed well before they were condemned by the missionaries.”

Thank you Gookums for connecting our culture across generations!

