

2015 GLOBAL CITIZEN AWARD WINNER



DR. SHAUNEEN PETE is from Little Pine First Nation (SK), and is the mother of three independent and adventurous young people (Alina, Jordan and Tara). She is a teacher, storyteller, public speaker, writer for RezX Magazine and co-producer of the television show,

The Four. Currently she is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Regina, where she also serves as the Executive Lead: Indigenization. In this role, she is acknowledged as a leader in moving the University towards a greater commitment to Indigenous students, Indigenous values and Indigenous ways of knowing.

As a teacher educator dedicated to anti-racist and anti-oppressive education, Dr. Pete has spent more than a decade doing the difficult work of engaging students with the realities of racism and colonialism. While students often start out resistant to learning or knowing these things, Shauneen skillfully enables her students to understand themselves, and the context that they are living in on Treaty 4 land.

Shauneen is deeply committed to undoing the years of violence and silence towards Aboriginal peoples. She does this work in a generous way, by opening up spaces and inviting her students and colleagues to increasingly see themselves as allies, and begin to act as such. This generosity makes even difficult conversations about systemic racism and colonialism productive, enabling us to move forward together.

A Conversation with Saskatchewan's Global Citizens...

What does global citizenship mean to you?

In my work with First Nations Elders they taught me an important lesson: *We are all related*. Global Citizenship means to me that individuals must be careful to ensure that their actions do not negatively impact on the lives of peoples elsewhere. We must act in responsible and respectful ways.

Tell us about a teacher, mentor, or other role-model who really made a difference in your life.

My father's mother, Myra was an influential person in my life. She spoke Cree fluently and was a medicine person. My Kohkom

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asked for a pass from the Indian Agent to leave Little Pine First Nation so that she could study for her teaching certificate. She was a teenager when she left the reserve. She returned home and started a school in the basement of the Anglican Church.



Photo: U of R Photography

Kohkom had nine children; seven of them went to post-secondary. My Kohkom was a visionary woman: her children still speak their language; the medicine teachings are still taught in our family and her children were teachers, administrators, accountants, band administrators and one is a lawyer. Her vision to get an education forever changed how her children saw their own potential; and how we grandchildren see our own.

What do you feel are some of the biggest challenges currently facing our global community, and some possible solutions?

One of the biggest challenges that I see is our over reliance on the consumption of non-renewable resources. Social policy and action, science and education must reflect the goal of sustainability. We need to return to Indigenous wisdom: *take only what you need*.

What advice would you give to today's high-school graduates?

You must do what you are passionate about. You will feel obligated to follow in your parents' foot-steps; you may feel pressure



Photo by Bill Stevenson

to join your friends as they study or work in a particular field: but you must do your own thing. The hints are in the activities in which you get lost, that you find you speak at length about - that is where passion lies. Go there, do that. Trust that the Creator has led you to this all along.

Where do you find your inspiration?

I often return to the Qu'Appelle Valley. My grandparents raised my mother at Cowessess; and for as long as I can remember, driving

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across the prairie and then over the crest of the hill down into the valley always felt like going home. I clear my head in the breezes that come off the lake; I find peace on the hills with the sunshine on my face. Clarity comes when I sit on the lands where my people lived. Inspiration comes when I think of the generations yet to come. ♦