



First Nations teen earning rave reviews for archery prowess

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"We're all surprised at how quickly she grew in the sport. But she's attended some elite clinics over the past years." — Joanne Soldier, Waasayah's mother

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Windspeaker.com

Despite her age, Waasayah Munro-Soldier continues to rack up impressive accolades for her archery skills.



Waasayah Munro-Soldier

Earlier this week, Munro-Soldier, a 13-year-old Grade 8 student, was announced as the winner of the 2021 Archery Manitoba female 3D archer of the year award.

Austin Taylor, a junior at Kentucky's Lindsey Wilson College, was selected as the male recipient of the award. This past year he was the U.S. collegiate 3D champion.

The awards, handed out by the provincial governing body for archery in Manitoba, recognize the two archers with the most outstanding achievements in provincial, national or international 3D archery in the past year.

Most people are probably aware that in archery competitors use bows to shoot arrows at targets. But in 3D archery, instead of flat, round targets that have a bullseye in the middle, 3D targets are three-dimensional animals comprised of foam or plastic. These targets can be placed in outdoor or indoor ranges. Points are awarded based on where the animal targets are hit.

Munro-Soldier was rather surprised when she got the news on Monday that she had been selected for the Archery Manitoba award.

"I was excited, speechless and kind of happy," she said.

Munro-Soldier is a member of Fox Lake Cree Nation through her father Reil. Her mother, Joanne Soldier, is a member of Swan Lake First Nation in Manitoba.

"Waasayah has a whole community rooting for her," Soldier said of Swan Lake Nation. "They've always been willing to support her financially for her events."

Munro-Soldier, who attends Elmwood High School in Winnipeg, has been earning praise for her archery skills for a few years.

She was introduced to the sport in November 2018 when she registered for lessons at Heartland Archery in Winnipeg.

A few months later, in February 2019, she entered her first competition, the Manitoba indoor championships. She had some immediate success, winning a silver medal in her category.

"It was just funny how her first competition was the provincials that February," said Soldier.

The young archer has continued to win several medals at various competitions, including both the Manitoba indoor and outdoor championships the past few years.

In 2021, she was crowned the provincial champ in her Cub division, for those ages 14 and under.

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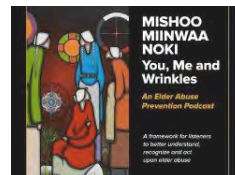
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Munro-Soldier was not only named to the provincial 3D archery squad this past year, but she was chosen to be a member of the province's target team, an offer she turned down to concentrate further on her 3D development.

"I think she just has a natural talent," Soldier said of her daughter, the only female named to the provincial 3D squad. "We're all surprised at how quickly she grew in the sport. But she's attended some elite clinics over the past years."

Munro-Soldier is keen to progress up the ranks in her sport.

"I want to go travel the world and see how archery is in different countries," she said.

Her mother is among those who are predicting a bright future for her.

"I think she's going to make it to the international levels," Soldier said.

Soldier said her daughter is benefitting from the fact numerous elite archers from Canada are from Manitoba. Munro-Soldier has attended various camps featuring high-level athletes.

"She's surrounded by that level of archers," Soldier said.

Though she was just 10 at the time, in July of 2019 Munro-Soldier placed first in her category at the Manitoba trials for the North American Indigenous Games (NAIG).

Her victory earned her a spot on the Manitoba squad for the NAIG, which were originally scheduled for 2020 in Halifax. But the pandemic postponed those Games.

That multi-sport competition has been further postponed and is now slated to take place during the summer of 2023.

Besides participating at the 2023 NAIG, Munro-Soldier is also hoping to take part in the 2025 world youth archery championships, which are scheduled to take part in her hometown of Winnipeg.

Munro-Soldier is believed to be the only Indigenous member of Archery Manitoba, which was a surprise to her mother.

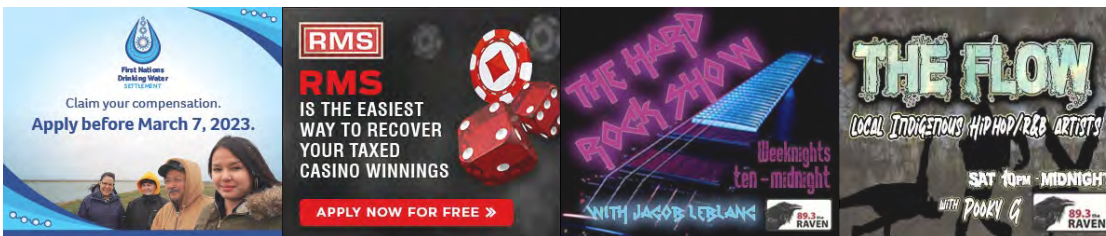
So much so that Soldier said she has thought about starting an archery club specifically for Indigenous youth.

"I've been considering it," she said. "But we also have to consider the resources to the kids."

Soldier said archery is not a cheap sport to get into.

Her daughter's latest elite bows and accessories cost about \$5,000. And Soldier said expenses travelling to various competitions can add up to about \$10,000 annually.

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