



Breakfast is a work of art at Cold Lake energy camp

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“Once she started decorating, the next thing you know the art started to come out. It’s been awesome watching the whole process. That is the vision that came through.” — Frank Kytwayhat, head chef at the Primco Dene Cenovus Energy camp

By Crystal St.Pierre
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter
Windspeaker.com

Crystal Gladue is bringing a unique and cultural spin to the table — the breakfast table that is.

“It was supposed to be just a hobby actually. I was just doing basic plating at first, like swirls and dots,” explained Gladue. “I started creating Aboriginal designs after that and the clients, oh my gosh, they look forward to coming for breakfast every morning just to see what I make every night.”

Gladue works as the night supervisor for Primco Dene at the Cenovus Energy camp in Cold Lake, Alta.

The 41-year-old mother of three works from 9 p.m. to 9 a.m. on a two-week in, one-week out schedule.

Her family is from Flying Dust First Nation near Meadow Lake in Saskatchewan.

Each night she prepares the morning breakfast and lunch. She and her staff work hard during the night to ensure all the clients at the camp are provided with enough food and supplies for the morning.

Since her promotion to this position in December, she has felt drawn to creating a wide variety of historic Cree art using a very unique media— ice cream sauces.

From bear, salmon, women and Elders, each morning the clients are graced with a new creation by Gladue, put on display in the service line at the camp. Her tools are simple, she explained, a toothpick and a small paintbrush.

“I had to bring my own food colours in and my own icing in. I am only allowed to work with three colours in camp, and that is the ice cream sauces — chocolate, strawberry and caramel,” she explained.

Gladue said she spends each morning after work googling traditional Cree drawings until she feels inspired.

Recently, she also recreated one specific drawing that her late brother had drawn.

Gladue’s brother, Howard, passed away six years ago on Christmas Eve. He and Gladue worked together at his decal shop, but Gladue says she was never as talented as he was when it came to drawing.

“I actually started drawing at seven years old. I didn’t go to art school. I’m self taught pretty much,” she said.

“My family is pretty artistic. I’m the youngest of 10. There was only about four or five of us with that talent. My biggest inspiration was my brother. He was the best artist in the family.”

She feels her brother is watching over her and guiding her along this journey to reconnect with her creative side.

“My artistic ability was never as good as since I started drawing again. I believe, spiritually, my brother is here with me,” she said. “It’s amazing how much my skill has expanded so much from these platings. I couldn’t draw people and I



Crystal Gladue from Flying Dust First Nation, Sask. gives the clients a treat for the eyes and the stomach each morning at Primco Dene, Cenovus Energy camp in Cold Lake, Alta. Photo on the right by Rhonda Brideau, Photos on the left courtesy of Mark Robertson

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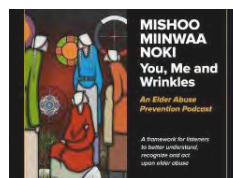
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couldn't draw animals. My brother is definitely guiding me. It's my hand and sometimes I don't even know how I do it."

Each night, Gladue works on her project of the day, which takes about half-an-hour, to an hour-and-a-half.

She starts by drawing on the plate, then she uses the syrups, icing and fruit to complete it.

Frank Kytwayhat, head chef at the camp, said when Gladue started all he asked from her was to put a few berries and some whip cream on the breakfast plates to "jazz it up."

Soon after she was creating these amazing and beautiful drawings that everyone looks forward to each morning.

"Once she started decorating, the next thing you know the art started to come out.

It's been awesome watching the whole process," said Kytwayhat. "That is the vision that came through."

He said he hopes Gladue takes her talent further and one day opens a catering company or starts making cakes.

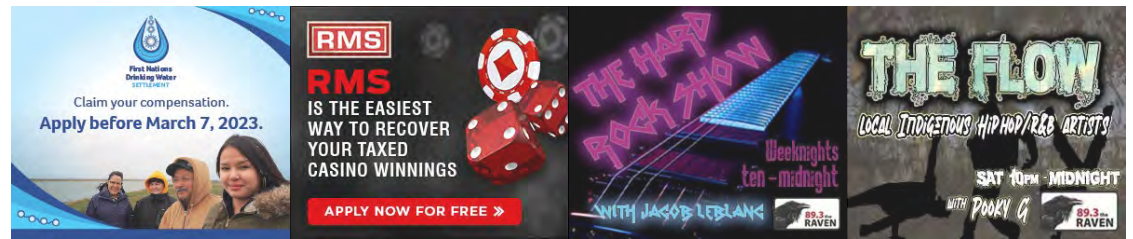
"I'm very proud of her. We all are so proud of her," he said.


Gladue said she is considering opening a food truck or a cake business one day, but for now she has ordered some new tools to try out at home and see how she does.

She credits much of her journey to the support from Kytwayhat and their camp manager Rhonda Brideau.

"My camp family played a very big role with my talent," said Gladue. "Their support got me this far. They have my love and respect for getting me this far."

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Windspeaker.com
a division of Aboriginal Multi-Media Society
13245 - 146 Street
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5L 4S8
Ph. (780) 455-2700 / Fax: (780) 455-7639
E. news@ammsa.com

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