



Lynette Fisher, Sunchild School Teacher

Lynette Fisher is a new teacher to Sunchild School in 2023, teaching grade 10 English, Socials, Foods and more, but she's also a student.

“Our elders say to seek wisdom, because you can never know enough. It's about diving into new things, not being afraid. I still consider myself a student.”

Lynette can challenge the status quo with her energy, self-awareness, and traditional teachings wisdom. She learned self-awareness at a young age, when her mother was taking classes for her social work degree at the University of Regina. Lynette had to go to classes and keep quiet while being productive.

“As a single mother she could not afford childcare, so I went with her. So “I started going to university when I was 5! Usually, I had my own desk. I had to be quiet and not cause a distraction in class.”

“My mother spent time communicating to me how important the classes were, so that she could enable a better life for us.” Lynette took the directive seriously.

Lynette's self-awareness also comes from having to “be the ears” for her brother.

“My late brother was born hearing impaired. My mom taught me that I had to be his ears. When we were outside playing, I had to listen for both of us.’

“So my childhood was based on an extreme amount of self-awareness —what I was doing and where I was in relation to my brother and to others” or being aware of not making a distraction in the university classrooms.

Lynette was raised with traditional teaching. “I had to use patience, respect and love, some of the sacred teachings, to focus on what I needed to do to help my mom, as she worked to help our family.”

She is Anishinaabe from Chippewa of the Thames in Ontario. It’s a Matriarchal society and directions from women are highly respected.

The Anishinabee were the originators of the 7 Sacred Teachings, says Lynette. Those teachings are Patience, Respect, Courage, Bravery, Wisdom, Humility, and Truth.

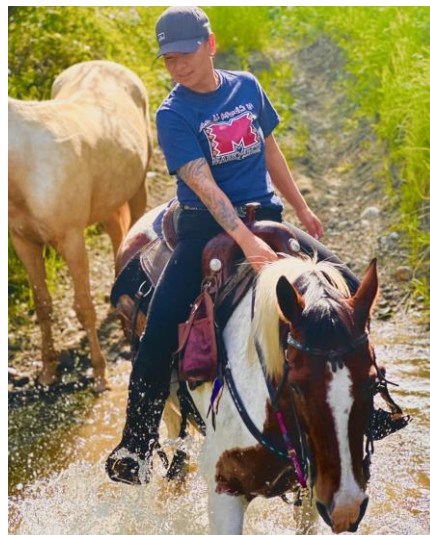
She says it all begins in the home, with the family passing along those teachings to kids, and reinforcing them for parents.

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Unfortunately, as a child who grew up in Moose Jaw, Lynette was the target of a lot of racism, not just by kids, but by adults too. Her grandparents were the ones who helped her the most in dealing with that.

“So, I became a very angry child, but my mother showed me that my emotions, my behaviour, affected the environment.”

“Horses were more reasonably priced then, and she bought me a horse, a gelding, for \$800. It was a spirited animal, and Nohkum (my grandmother) gifted me horse teachings.”



Teenaged Lynette with her horse

She elaborates, “to be successful with a horse, you have to be self-disciplined to care for the horse, for example in all kinds of weather, and be calm and caring, and also know what you want to do with the training, even if the horse might have other ideas.”

Lynette explains a horse wants calmness, and it can sense if you are calm. She became very self-aware of her emotions around her horse.

“The horse can tell how you are feeling. A horse will always respond to the energy you bring to it. I got bucked off a few times.”

Lynette felt she had to produce results with her gift of a gelding horse, because she knew her mother’s sacrifice. “Every day, I’d ride my bike to the farm where the horse was and train the horse for a few hours.”

As the time and the years passed, Lynette got into barrel racing and eventually got first place in the South Saskatchewan Roping and Riding Club. Her determination took her to the winner’s circle again and again, and her mother got 10 years of first place trophies.

These experiences of being hyper-aware while going to classes with her Mom, while she cared for her brother, and while training her horse are “my foundation for who I am and how I do things,” says Lynette’ “It made me a resilient and aware student.”



Lynette with her Nohkum (my grandmother) and Nimosom (my grandfather)

As she grew up with her horse, Lynette felt a strong benefit from the horse teaching, and wanted other kids to experience what she experienced with horses.

This drive—and empathy—led her to design a horse teaching program for at-risk youth, kids her own age, in Saskatchewan. Seeing the positive impacts in those experiences, Lynette decided to become a teacher, where she could work with kids every day.

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Lynette's traditional teachings included Medicine Wheel teaching. It's the balance of the 4 quadrants:

- **Physical** - we are meant to have physicality, to have exercise
- **Emotional** - having patience, having love
- **Spiritual** - we are believers, we believe in a Creator
- **Mental** - we have the ability to question ourselves

"If you can envision a spinning top, the goal is balance," says Lynette. All 4 tops are moving, but she explains the tops will never move perfectly.

"Just when you think you're fine, the engine goes in your truck. Or you twist your ankle on the stairs and you're out for a while. And you have to adjust the balance, pay more attention to one quadrant or the other."

"They will never be in perfect balance but it's the attempt to balance them that is more important. This creates resilience."

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"I excel in sports," says Lynette. "I've always played sports."

She was a 2-time provincial Tae Kwon Do champion in Saskatchewan, and likes Tae Kwan Do for discipline and for self-defense.

Just like the Medicine Wheel teachings say, Lynette recommends exercise for everyone. "The Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women (MMIW) is a real issue. My daughter is starting kick boxing, so she can protect herself."

When she met her husband Jared Louison, he coached her to be a golfer. Now, she doesn't tee off from the women's tees. She uses the men's tees, which are further back, further away from the hole. (As Jared noted in his teacher profile, Lynette also beat his score.)

Tae Kwan Do, golf...anything else? Yes. Lynette also excels at bodybuilding.

“After my brother passed away, I had a long period of grief. I tried different ways of regaining balance, but it just wasn’t happening. And I began to realize that I didn’t recognize my body anymore. My body was holding onto anger.”



Lynette training as a bodybuilder.

Lynette went back to the gym, and for 2 years, “I’d go training every morning at 4 AM.” She says that’s the time of day when her energy is highest. More about that later.

Lynette says bodybuilding is one of the hardest sports. “It takes extreme focus and discipline,” she explains, “because you’re focusing on genetics. You’re working with the DNA you have, and you’re also working against the DNA you have.”

As you might expect, a bodybuilder is passionate about eating healthy foods. All of that exercise requires food and fuel for the body. In her family life, Lynette tries to practise intuitive eating. “Be in touch with your body, and it will tell you what you need.”

She advises that we need to have clean fuel going into our bodies to work with our natural energy and keep our balance. “We’re pretty strict in our house. We practise clean eating. That’s no additives, no artificial colours or flavours. Basically, no processed foods.”

She has some words of advice for kids, too. “If kids stop asking their parents for pizza pops, then they’re going to be further ahead. It leads to more meal planning and more meal prep, but it’s way healthier.”

Lynette explains more about energy levels. “Energy levels and discipline are impacted by what we put in our bodies. You have to identify what is your high energy point of time in the day, and what is your low point.”

In the classroom, Lynette realizes that students have high energy or lower energy, and knows the students’ energies feed off one another, interconnected.

“When I’m teaching, if I find high energy then we focus on important topics. If the energy is too high, we step outside and expel the energy by going for a walk. Then we come back and we’re able to continue learning.”

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After graduating from First Nations University at University of Regina with degrees in Indigenous Studies and Education, Lynette taught in Southern Saskatchewan, and in Ontario, and in Frog Lake in Northern Alberta.

Why did Lynette and her family come to Sunchild? “We got to see the mountains. And in the interview, they mentioned a horse paddock. I was sold right away.”

Lynette also wants education to be more respectful to First Nations. She says a teacher must get the right perspective to teach from the place of First Nations.

Her description of education sounds like a new direction that’s not colonial at all.

“For a number of years, we’ve been saying that education is our new buffalo.” She first read about the metaphor in a book by Blair Stonechild, a Saskatchewan author.

“Okay, so let’s look at that. Metaphorically, what makes education a buffalo? Let’s break down the steps of a hunt:

- A group of us wants to go, to increase our chances of success, and we are all interdependent.
- Who are the veterans of buffalo hunting? The veterans are the teachers.
- Who does the planning for the hunt? The teachers. They’re the ones we should pay attention to, because they know what they’re doing.
- We wouldn’t take anyone on the hunt who is not quiet, or not focused. So don’t make noise, and don’t distract others. Read your book at the same time as the rest of the class.
- What are our tools? Well, we wouldn’t sharpen our knives when we’re out hunting. We’d do that beforehand, to prepare. So don’t come to school without your pencils sharpened, or you can’t find your pen.”

Every day, Lynette practises Patience, learned from her Anishinaabe culture. “How I handle myself is important. Self-awareness is discipline, and consistency will get you results. And discipline takes practise. It takes time to learn to be disciplined.”

“When we feel uncomfortable about a task, the best thing we can do is to lean into that and learn. By spending time with it, we become more used to it, more comfortable, more confident that we can do it.”