

Voices OF HOPE

Alberta

At age seven, Dr. Vivian Ayoungman of Siksika Nation, and her siblings, were forced to attend Old Sun Residential School near Gleichen, Alberta, as their parents had before them. Vivian spoke no English and the teachers separated them from their language, their culture and each other.

She has always been angry thinking about "how I was cheated out of knowing the things I'm supposed to know, because I was in this place." After its closing, the building was turned into a community college in 1971 by the First Nation.

Through First Nation Adult and Higher Education Consortium (FNAHEC), It offers adult classes in Siksika culture, academic upgrading, literacy and post-secondary programs. Since 2000, PWRDF has been supporting FNAHEC, and Ayoungman started teaching at the college in 2010, working with ceremonial knowledge keepers, who hold traditional knowledge and teachings.

"I'm not as angry anymore, because I think to myself, I always thought that knowledge was gone forever. Working in developing this curriculum, implementing it, sitting through the courses myself, it has been, yes, a really healing journey for me," she says.




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