

Respect Works Here

Community Champion

An interview with **Frank Marchand** reveals a man who is generous, kind, funny and unbelievably resilient. He has overcome hardships and injury and forges on, trying to make the world a better, safer place for others. His honesty, humility and strength shine through as he shares stories of his life.

Frank is fiercely proud of being Okanagan, and feels very connected to the land he has spent his whole life on. "I was born and raised here and I'm not planning to go anywhere else," he says simply.

Growing up, Frank lived through hard times, and was on his own taking care of his younger brother when he was 18 and his brother 16.

"I remember back then starving. We would go hunting and lived on rice some weeks," he recalls.

Today he makes sure that whenever anyone in his community faces hardship, he delivers food and supplies and tries to help with chores around their home.

"I make sure no one goes hungry. One year I fed 33 families," he says proudly. "I bring them deer meat, fish, hides, or whatever they need."

Frank is committed to protecting the land and keeping it as natural as possible for the next seven generations

and believes in hunting and fishing in moderation, along with restocking, to ensure a food supply in the future.

Frank spent many years teaching ethno botany to local school children, sharing the knowledge he learned from his father and Elders in the community as well as his own readings and research about local plants and animals.

Frank also worked as a counsellor and social worker, with a focus on helping families stay together.

A serious car accident in 2008 changed everything and resulted in a severe brain injury, as well as physical damage to his legs and knees. Frank spent two years healing; however his injuries have an ongoing impact on his life and effectively forced his retirement.

Today he focuses on doing what he loves to do: sharing First Nations traditions and knowledge with children and youth. He teaches native games like Double Ball (the first form of Lacrosse) and still teaches ethno botany to select schools. He has also taken up teaching canoe building as a way to commemorate his father, an artist and master carver.

Frank speaks highly of his father and is thankful for the many skills he taught him.

"He taught me everything I know – how to build log houses and canoes, how to hunt and fish, work on cars and get firewood and more."

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~ Frank Marchand

"When he was teaching me those things, I swore I would never use them. But I absolutely depend on those skills now," he says ruefully.

Another lesson his father taught him is poignantly true for Frank. "He always drilled it in our heads 'You never learn just one skill because that one skill can let you down and you still need to keep making money for your family. You need more skills to back it up,'" quotes Frank. "That's why I do the variety of things I do now."

For the many challenges Frank has faced, it's incredibly heart-warming to see how purposeful and generous he is with his skills and talents, sharing and giving back to the community he loves so much.

