



# Respect Works Here

## Community Champion

For **Vince Van Wieringen** finding out in his late twenties he was Métis gave his life new purpose and passion.

“My great-grandmother was Métis and my mother never knew. Her mother did but in those days Métis was a dirty word. My grandmother told her kids about eight years ago and then we really researched what the Métis are culturally and historically.”

This personal life revelation came on the heels of realigning his work life to focus on a culinary career. Suddenly, Vince found stability and balance for both his work and life passions. Since taking over as president of the Vernon and District Métis Association in 2013, he has made a significant difference to the Métis community, especially with the youth, in the North Okanagan.

“I focus on the youth because I feel like if I had known, it would have made a difference in my life.”

Growing up, Vince struggled with a lack of identify and belonging. This led to him making (self-professed) poor life choices that left him vulnerable and at risk.

“I never fit in and I never knew who I was growing up,” says Vince. “Once I found out I was Métis, I felt like I did know who I was. And that I had a purpose.”

Vince had already started on a new career path by challenging himself to train as an executive chef. Ironically, for someone who never felt like they belonged, he knew the hospitality industry was where he felt his best because he could make others feel welcome. He took a pay cut from working at the local pub to dedicate himself to learning the finer points of cooking under the chef at Predator Ridge. Through hard work and dedication, he has gained his Red Seal and is currently Executive Chef at a boutique hotel.

Vince found his community with the Métis and has made significant impact on the growth of the Vernon Métis and District Association and its various programs and cultural events. His mother has also become very involved acting as the Secretary.

“I find the community very engaged now,” he says proudly. “As a family man to have my fiancé be Métis, my children be Métis ... it all really connects us,” says Vince. “It really solidifies the Métis in me.”

For his future, Vince looks to continue to build both professionally, with youth apprentices in his kitchen, and personally to build the Métis awareness in the community.

“Once I found out I was Métis, I felt like I knew who I was.”

- Vince Van Wieringen

“It is very difficult with the racism in Vernon. It’s tough anywhere in Canada for the Métis to belong. We haven’t belonged anywhere for over 152 years. The Daniels case has now solidified that the Métis are a people. We fall under the Indian Act. We have our own culture, our own heritage. So that is a huge step and we need to continue to build on that and give the information to the youth.”

