October 8, 2014

Dreamcatcher keynote speaker shares the story of turning his life around

Edmonton—Ever since he was a young boy growing up in Winnipeg, Stefan Richard dreamt of wrestling professionally in Japan – basically a sacred pilgrimage for anyone in the wrestling world. And he was so close to achieving his dream when years of substance abuse that began when he was in his late teens caught up with him.

Richard’s story is one of obstacles and adversity, seeing his life in shambles and overdosing 36 hours before wrestling in his first and only match in Japan. But, it’s also a story of coming back, finding a new path, and learning to achieve more.

These are the messages that Stefan hopes will resonate with young people at the 2014 Dreamcatcher Aboriginal Youth Conference when he presents the opening keynote address. The conference’s message of self-empowerment – Dream, Learn, Achieve – are words that the 27 year old now lives by every day.

But rewind a few years and Stefan says it didn’t feel like dreaming, learning and achieving were even part of his vocabulary. “There were a few very dark times in my life,” says Richard. “Addiction, divorce, homelessness and finding my way with a white mother in a ritzy neighbourhood while my Aboriginal dad lived on the reserve are all part of my story. I still carry the pain and broken heart with me, but today I also think of myself as successful and that’s something I need to share.”

“I call it the gift of desperation,” says Richard. “Things got bad enough, my wife left me and took my son, I was homeless and had nowhere to go, nobody wanted to talk to me, and I was given a choice to continue on that path or change, so I changed.”

The Dreamcatcher Aboriginal Youth Conference, the largest of its kind in Canada, will be held on Saturday, October 18 at MacEwan University’s City Centre Campus.

MacEwan.ca/Dreamcatcher

Founded in 1971, MacEwan University inspires its students with a powerful combination of academic excellence and personal learning experiences. Offering more than 65 programs including undergraduate degrees, applied degrees, diplomas, certificates, continuing education and corporate training, the university provides a transformative education in a creative, collaborative and supportive learning environment where creativity and innovation thrive. Located in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, MacEwan University offers a unique student experience that opens up diverse pathways for achievement and growth.

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