



Celebrating local Indigenous Youth Creativity: AbbyPD's Shoulder Flash Contest

In 2023, the Abbotsford Police Department launched a contest inviting local Indigenous youth from our school district to design a shoulder flash that would represent their heritage, family, and community values. The initiative aimed to reflect the attributes they wished to see in their police force.

The response was positively overwhelming, with over 40 submissions of artwork received. On Truth and Reconciliation Day in 2023, these submissions were displayed in the AbbyPD lobby, where the public was invited to vote for their favorite design.

The winning design, created by Liam Silver, a Grade 12 student from W.J. Mouat Secondary School, was chosen to be digitally rendered into an official police shoulder flash for the AbbyPD to be worn on future Truth and Reconciliation Days. This design was unveiled in a grand ceremony on National Truth and Reconciliation Day this year (2024).

On September 30th, during the event, Liam was brought on stage for the official unveiling of his design. He had the opportunity to speak about his creation, and in a powerful moment, the police officers on stage simultaneously replaced their regular flashes with the new flashes, to the enthusiastic applause of the crowd.

As a token of appreciation, Liam was gifted one of the new flashes to keep as a memento of his achievement. This event not only celebrated Liam's artistic talent but also highlighted the importance of community and cultural representation within the police force.



Liam's Inspiration behind his design:

The inspiration for the patch came to him from thinking back to stories told to him by his grandfather about his ancestors and thinking how best to meld those ancestral stories with his views of policing. He recalled specifically a story about how the great Thunderbird was a protector and overseer of the community. This inspired Liam to have the Thunderbird as the focal point of his



design. The blue “waves” within the body of the Thunderbird represent “life as a river” that is ever-moving forward, but can have different paths to its final destination. The large red and green circles within the body of the Thunderbird represent the Thunderbird’s attempt to see everyone in the community all at once and the need for all people to be seen in the same fair way by the police. The red circles in the tips of each feather represent community members experiencing the touch and safety of the Thunderbird. The four human figures beneath the Thunderbird represent the entire community of Abbotsford of all ethnicities and genders who are all feeling the support of the Thunderbird in different ways. He believed this was akin to how the police should continue with their efforts to support the community in all of its diversity. The white stars and circles surrounding the Thunderbird represent the ancestors who help guide and support the Thunderbird in its duty to protect the community. The large red eye is representative of the creator who oversees not only the Thunderbird, but the community and ancestors. The orange background was used because it’s the primary colour for Truth and Reconciliation symbolism.

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