



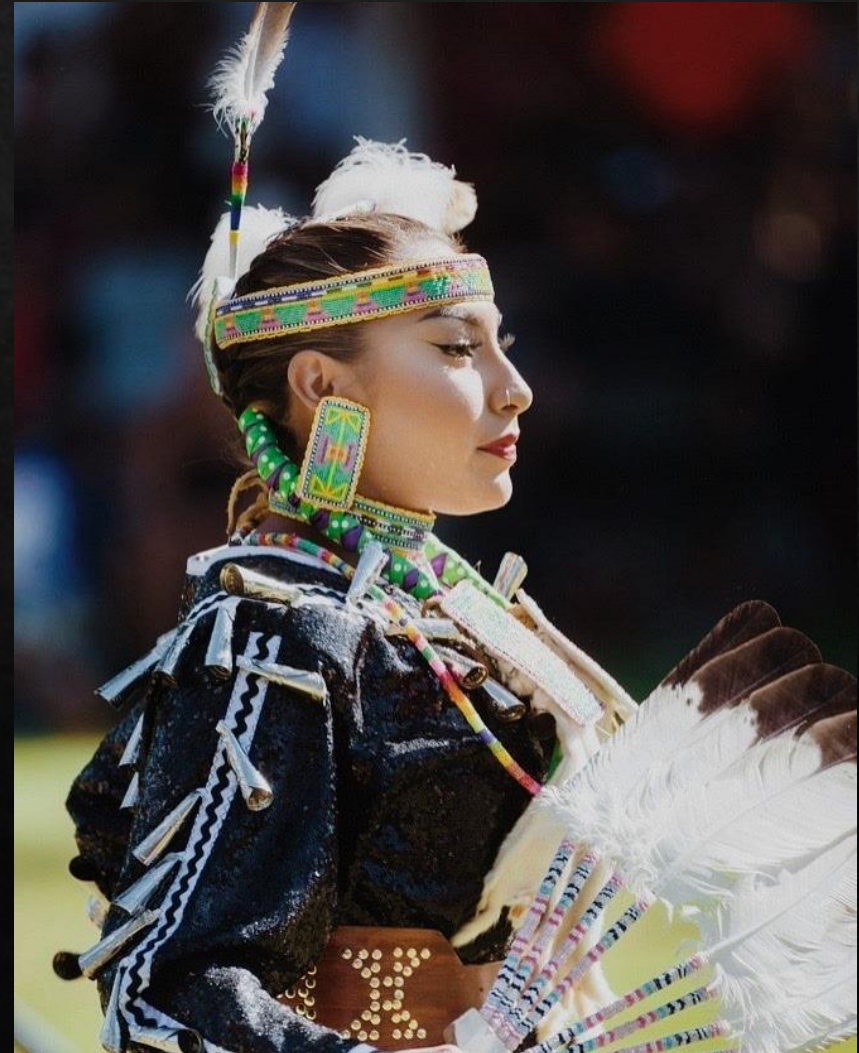
My story

Yetko Bearshirt Robins

Introduction

Hello, my name is Yetko Bearshirt- Roins. My Syilx name is (nʔaʕikʷ). I am twenty-one years old, and born and raised in the unceded syilx territory.

I am currently attending the University of British Columbia Okanagan, pursuing my childhood goal in becoming a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner. I am proud of both of my Blackfoot and Syilx cultures, and I am currently learning both Blackfoot and Syilx languages. My Father Leonard Bearshirt is Blackfoot, and from the Siksika Nation, located outside of Calgary Alberta. My mother Randi Robins is Syilx (Okanagan), and from the Okanagan Indian Band located in Vernon, British Columbia.



Both of my blackfoot and okanagan have actively been involved in the powwow circle, including: my father, uncles, and late grandpa who actually are known singers in the circle. My mother spent most of her childhood travelling to powwows with my late grandfather Emery Robins in an old school van full of her cousins, and siblings. The whole family enjoyed travelling and being at powwows. My mother, aunties, and cousins were also dancers in their childhood.

Being raised in the Okanagan has allowed me to learn the language and culture at a very young age. I attended the daycare, preschool, and kindergarten at *SNC'C'AMALA?TN*, and the cultural Immersion School (*nk'map'iqs i? snm'am'aya?tn i? kl sqilxwtet*) from grade 2-7. It allowed me to learn the language from a young age, and be as culturally orientated that I am today.

Syilx



My First Traditional Regalia



My first regalia was created by my parents when I was the age of two. It was made out of an old blue t-shirt. The designs were blackfoot designs, with some white ribbon. My father also beaded me a crown, which I still have today.





Since then, I have tried out all three styles of dance.

I went from dancing Traditional, to fancy, and then to Jingle.

When I was six years old, my mother and aunty Joan created my first fancy outfit for me. It was a simple white shawl with green and orange ribbons, with a green skirt. I danced fancy for about two or three years before I fell in love with Jingle. I had a very simple Jingle dress, it was red and white with silver cones, I remember that I loved that dress. Once I reached the age of 10, my family began purchasing more contemporary styled jingle dresses, and beadwork from the local well known seamstress, and beader Sophie White.

Jingle Dress Dancing

I fell in love with the Jingle dress when I was eight or nine years old. I loved the sound the jingles made, I loved how the women held themselves while wearing the dress, and I loved the meaning behind the dress. I love how its known as the “healing dance” and how it’s dedicated to praying. My mom and late grandpa emery were the biggest supporters I had. My mom would stay up many hours beading all my accessories, and my late grandpa would help purchase dresses for me. Jingle dresses can get pretty expensive. I earned all my feathers through my late grandpa, he taught me how to take care of myself and my outfits. My first fan I earned was a redhawk fan, with one eagle feather on it. Later on I earned my plumes, and I received my “stick up” feather after graduating highschool.

The story of the jingle dress

The jingle dress began with the Northern Ojibwa tribe. The story is that the dress was first seen in a dream. A medicine man's granddaughter grew sick, and as he slept his spirit guides came to him and told him to make a Jingle dress for her. They said if she danced in it the dress would heal her. The Jingle dress was made, and the tribe came together to watch her dance. At first, she was too sick to dance alone and so her tribe carried her, but after a little time she was able to dance alone, cured of her sickness.



Contemporary
Vs
Old style

There is two styles of jingle dress dancing, there's old style (the original style) and contemporary style (the newer style). Old style dancing is more simple foot work, with a simple dress. Old style doesn't using a fan or any feathers.

Contemporary includes a fan and feathers, and more footwork. The dresses also include more designs and are typically more colourful.

Contemporary vs Old style

Contemporary Jingle dress



Old style jingle dress



Taking care of yourself

While being involved in the powwow circle, I was taught that its very important to take care of your mental, spiritual, and physical health. It allows you to have a clear mind and have no negative energy while wearing your regalia. Especially as a jingle dress dancer, the purpose is to pray for those needing prayers, to pray for yourself, and to allow yourself to have a clear mind at powwows.

To keep in shape for powwows I enjoy playing fastball to keep in shape for the season as jingle dress dancing uses a lot of your leg muscles and energy.



With powwow dancing, it includes a lot of travelling. I've travelled all over British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and in the United States of America. I enjoy travelling with my family, no matter the amount of the number of kilometers, and hours it takes to reach our destination. I enjoy making new friends at powwows from different tribes and learning about their culture.



My most proudest moments in my life are when little girls approach me and ask me to teach them how to dance, or when they compliment my dancing. A moment that will stick with me for life was when I was at the T'suu Tina Powwow in Alberta, I was dancing in my category and I was out of breathe and tired. Two little girls were sitting in front of me, and told me "you were my favourite dancer out there" those two little girls made my day and allowed me to finish the second song happily knowing I made two little girls day.

Being A Role Model

When I was a little girl, there were no jingle dress dancers in my family so I looked up to many women in the circle, knowing I'd like to be role model for young girls also. In many families there's a lot of first generation powwow dancers that need guidance, and I hope I can be someone that will be easily approachable for them.

When I was fourteen I had the opportunity to run for Miss Kamloopa. The Miss Kamloopa pageant was a strict role model position that many young ladies looked up to. It was a lot of hard work and dedication all weekend round, but it allowed me to make new friends.



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