“I am very proud to identify myself as a member of the First Nations. I am Atikamekw Nehirowesiw. I come from Opitciwan, a community located in the heart of boreal forests and more specifically to the north of Gouin Réservoir in the upper Mauricie region. I am a university student.”

From the outset, this is how Terry Randy Awashish introduces himself. Although he is just 25, Terry has already become a model of determination and success for all the other young people of his community. An artist at heart, with an entrepreneurial spirit and a vigorous sense of social awareness, Terry shares his passion for photography, painting and graphic design through his creations and his work.

In fact, Terry is currently completing a Bachelor in graphic design at Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), while being self-employed as photographer and graphic designer.

He had not intended to become an entrepreneur. Everything started in 2013, when, as a first objective, he launched his Website to share his photographs. He quickly received lots of demands for his services as photographer. Gradually, Terry expanded his offering by integrating his
graphic design skills. He created a brand for himself, a logo and a signature. He named his company “Ohomisiw”, which means “owl” in Atikamekw, to honor his grandfather.

Like many young people of remote communities who move to town to study, it took a lot of determination to pursue his studies. In fact, Terry had first started his studies at Cégep de Chicoutimi, and then decided to quit after the first term. “Solitude weighed heavily on me and I felt out of place. I also faced some racism”, confided Terry. Subsequently Terry discovered Institution Kiuna, where he studied for two years to get his college diploma.

While he was a student at Kiuna, Terry admits that, on numerous occasions, he felt like dropping everything: “There were several deaths in my family and each time I returned to Opitciwan for the funerals. As a result, I didn’t feel like going back to Odanak.” Nevertheless, each time, Terry went back to continue his studies with the aim of obtaining his degree.

It is during his studies at Kiuna that Terry had the opportunity to work as graphics designer for the first time. This experience led him to pursue his studies in plastic arts at UQAM. Life in Montreal was another huge adaptation. “I had to adapt to the big city, accept the realities of city life. It is a very individualistic society, while in my community, there is more mutual support”, noted Terry.

“Entrepreneurship is very important for our communities. It is important to secure existing jobs, but the young people should not think only to what already exists. Young people should think of creating new jobs in the community. A broad range of employment generates more economic and social development. The key is to keep on thinking of the needs of the community and to respond to those needs”, underlines Terry. “Make sure you always bring out something new.”

CONTACT:
Awashish_terry-randy@live.ca