



Heritage Project

Hello!
I am Elder Lyle

Dr. Wesley Lyle Keewatin Richards visited The Jungle Farm with a group from the Red Deer Friendship Centre last summer.



Elder Lyle, as his friends know him, was part of the 'Sixties Scoop' in Alberta and has long been an ardent advocate for Indigenous Peoples. He taught us many things during his visit to the farm, when he led a smudge ceremony to bless the fields where the group was going to pick their strawberries.

Elder Lyle's people came from Okanese First Nation in Saskatchewan, but he was adopted by a church minister and his wife shortly after he was born in 1959. That's why his full name combines his birth names and his adoptive names.

"I sometimes feel strange saying I did okay in my childhood, but it's important for the community to know that not everyone was a victim," said Elder Lyle. "When I searched for my birth family and met them in 1985, it became one of my biggest influences. I had people in Maskwacis and in Rocky, throughout the area really, who were inspirational role models for me."

Also in the mid 80s, Albert Lightning walked into the Red Deer Museum where Elder Lyle was working and asked him to look for his brother who had attended the 'Red Deer Indian Industrial School' in 1919 and never came home. After decades of advocating, researching and sharing his learnings, Elder Lyle saw ground penetrating radar arrive at the former Red Deer residential school site in 2021 to locate the burial sites of former students. An extensive article on this appeared in MacLean's Magazine, titled 'Finding David Lightning: The decades-long quest to locate an unmarked grave'.

"We set out to find one and found them all," said Elder Lyle, whose list of accomplishments includes Founder of the Red Deer-based 'Remembering the Children Society', Past President of the Red Deer Friendship Centre, and an Honorary Doctorate. He worked as a social worker with Children and Family Services for over 30 years.

"There has been a lot of work and a lot of struggles, but I've also had a lot of people helping me. I've dedicated myself to honouring Indigenous People's lives and families, because that type of honour is one of the most healing things we have."

'Native-style' Strawberry Cake

Elder Lyle enjoyed a piece of Leona's strawberry shortcake while he was at The Jungle Farm, and we found this recipe to be a good mix!

Ingredients:

- 2 1/2 cups cornmeal
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/3 cup oil
- 1/3 cup honey
- 1 1/2 cups milk
- 1/4 cup crushed strawberries

Method:

- Preheat oven to 375°F. Combine dry ingredients.
- Make a well in the centre and add oil, honey, and milk. Stir until the batter is smooth.
- Add strawberries and combine.
- Pour into a 9-inch round, oiled pan.
- Bake for 25 minutes, then lower the oven to 350°F for 5 minutes to allow the centre to cook through.

Optional Strawberry Cream Cheese Frosting:

- Combine 1/4 cup of mashed strawberries to 8 ounces of cream cheese. Add honey to taste. Enjoy!