

'One to watch'

Honoured FN youth to speak at diversity breakfast

BY LISA BECKWICK
THUNDER BAY

THE United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is observed on March 21. We mark this day to remember the 1960 Sharpeville massacre where 69 unarmed and peaceful demonstrators were killed by South African police as they protested the country's unjust apartheid laws.

Since proclaiming the Day in 1966, the General Assembly called on the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination.

Racist laws and practices have been abolished in many countries but despite much progress, racism continues to exist and to affect the lives of individuals, and ethnic and religious groups worldwide. Racism violates our human rights and our communities suffer from the injustice.

Diversity Thunder Bay is a grassroots community-based organization whose mission is to work towards an equitable community free of racism and discrimination of any kind.

Every year, Diversity Thunder Bay honours March 21 by hosting a breakfast celebration. This year marks our ninth annual event, and we are proud to announce our keynote speaker, Gabrielle Scrimshaw.

Named "One of three Young Aboriginal Canadians to Watch" by the Huffington Post, Gabrielle is a proud member of the Hatchet Lake First Nation in Northern Saskatchewan.

Because Gabrielle is First Nations, she was born with some daunting numbers stacked against



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her. She is eight times more likely to commit suicide than the average Canadian, three times more likely to be unemployed, be underfunded in her quest for education, and more likely to drop out of high school than finish it.

Despite these challenging circumstances, Gabrielle became the youngest associate accepted into one of Canada's most competitive post-graduate finance programs and was the first in her family to complete post-secondary education.

Coming from a community of just over 1,000, she has travelled, worked, lived and studied in 20 countries while working with heads of state.

Her drive for community involvement and having her voice heard was recognized as a rising city leader in Greater Toronto Area by CivicActions' DiverseCity Fellow program in 2011.

Scrimshaw also co-founded and is president of the Aboriginal Professional Association of Canada which is the first of its kind in the GTA and offers services and programming to First Nations, Métis and Inuit pro-

fessionals.

Gabrielle will speak on Aboriginal Leadership and Education: Our Shared Canadian Journey. Her presentation will focus on how Aboriginal people are growing in numbers, educational rates, and what it means for the Canadian economy.

She will share stories from her personal journey while linking it to the broader aboriginal and non-aboriginal context. She will share what motivates her and why each step we make is a responsibility to those who follow.

"We're growing, we're young, we're urbanized and we're increasingly more educated," she says. "We're really pursuing education as a new buffalo for our people. There's this population tsunami that's coming and it's hitting the workforce."

Gabrielle is passionate about diversity, leadership and innovation. She was recognized as Indspire's 2013 First Nations Youth Recipient, considered the highest honour the indigenous community bestows.

Please join us in our celebration breakfast on March 19 from 7:30-9 a.m., at the Victoria Inn. Purchase your tickets online at www.diversitythunderbay.ca.



TWITTER

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Lisa Beckwick is the director of Organizational and People Development for St. Joseph's Care Group, is co-chair for the breakfast celebration, and has been a member of Diversity Thunder Bay since 2005.