

## Raven's Eye: Special Section providing news from BC & Yukon

# Youth learn life lessons through martial arts

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### VANCOUVER

Three prominent First Nations entrepreneurs are donating time and money to help Vancouver's inner-city youth find perseverance and self-esteem through the sport of martial arts.

Since 2002, the Sukadoh Aboriginal Karate Club (SAKC) located on Vancouver's eastside has been helping many First Nation and non-Native youth obtain valuable tools.

It was the confidence boost martial arts had on Aboriginal youth in his home of Fort McMurray that lead successful businessman Gerry Gionet to donate \$10,000 to the Vancouver organization. As owner and operator of Aqua Industrial Ltd., a structural steel plant in Fort McMurray, Gionet knows the steadfast drive and determination it takes to operate a thriving business and he says martial arts training takes the same kind of rigid discipline needed to succeed.

Gionet said he jumped at the

opportunity to support such an important organization because of the connection the sport has to the kind of mental acuteness and passion needed in business and education.

Dave Tuccaro, president of the SAKC, said the youth have been getting good grades because of their participation the club.

Tuccaro believes that the club is important in reaching the youth who are at a high risk for drug dependency, gang involvement and prostitution.

"There are so many other temptations that are around, especially in east Vancouver. To give youth an alternative to that is one of the reasons I'm involved," said Tuccaro.

Tuccaro has also generously donated \$10,000 to the society.

"Youth love the society because it provides them with a space to harness and express their energy, said Calvin Helin, founder of SAKC. "Many Aboriginal youth have behavioural problems such as attention deficiency disorder (ADD) and fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) and the club provides a safe haven where

they can burn energy while developing needed confidence."

Cree Elder Jeanette Angus, a 60-year-old grandmother has been participating in martial arts with her grandson Tucker for nearly a year.

"It's an excellent expression for his self-esteem," said Angus. "I go to the weekly sessions so I can understand and be honest with his experience."

Karate master, Sensei Toshiaki Nomada, trained Helin in martial arts and now dedicates his life to mentoring adults and youth in the sport. Nomada works out of the Grandview elementary school gym, providing youth with a disciplined approach to martial arts and life. There is no cost to class participants and everyone involved in SAKC are volunteers.

Balance and flexibility, both physically and figuratively, are also important aspects of martial arts and life.

Thanks to the generous donations from Gionet, Tuccaro and the Shell oil company, Helin is planning to take youth to Japan next summer. Some of the proceeds from Helin's new best



SHAUNA LEWIS

Calvin Helin (left), founder of the Sukadoh Aboriginal Karate Club, poses with Sensei Toshiaki Nomada.

seller *Dances with Dependency* will help sponsor the trip.

Helin and Nomada are planning to bring a few of the most prominent martial arts masters to Vancouver so the youth will have an opportunity to train with them. Also, in June, select youth will have a chance to perform for the Maori King who will be in B.C. for a 10-day cultural tour.

"The more effort you give out the better you feel," said Helin.

"Whether physical or mental, all tools learned through martial arts can carry into one's work ethic and dedication in all aspects of life. "It is the absolute responsibility of successful Native people to give back because our Aboriginal communities need so much help," he said.

"We don't want to give back in a welfare way," he said. "We have to give back in a way where they can be self-reliant."