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VENDOR PROFILE

Woodrow Eagleman

BY LEONORA KO
STAFF WRITER

Woodrow Eagleman has an easy-going manner with an underlying strength that protects himself and others when needed.

His names describe that inner strength. "Woodrow" comes from relatives who served in the U.S. military. His family name includes "eagle," which stands for bravery and strength in the Lakota tradition.

He grew up in Wakpala, S.D., on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation.

"It's really small – a church, a kindergarten, Head Start," he said, "but we don't have any stores. We have to go to Mobridge for food and what we need.

"The land that they promised became less and less and less (and was placed) out of the way so they don't have to really see us. But we're doing pretty good now. We have Sitting Bull College (and) construction coordination. They go around fixing houses for the people and fixing roads."

At 6 years old, Woodrow was taken away from his father but was fortunate to be placed with his grandparents.

Both grandparents were respected tribal elders. His grandmother had 14 children before she earned a GED diploma and went on to earn two college degrees and to teach in the community. His grandfather played semi-professional basketball, raised money for

housing, served on the tribal council and built a baseball diamond for the community.

Woodrow said he has a good memory and easily listed what he learned from his grandfather: "Be passionate about what you do. Don't let negativity around you affect you. Respect your ability to do things. Always work hard. Help those who have less than you. Always give a helping hand. Just be there for others and family."

Woodrow also remembers the stories his grandfather told him, and relatives often ask Woodrow to repeat them.

"But I haven't been back there for a while," he said.

In September, Woodrow left South Dakota. He had tried college and road construction and worked almost 10 years at the same fast-food place. But when he quit that job and couldn't find other work, angry words were exchanged with his family, and he left his sister's home.

He and his girlfriend headed

for the West Coast for better prospects. But they quickly ran out of money and are now sleeping on the street. On Thanksgiving, they hit a low point when their identification cards and money were stolen.

A bright spot has been Street Roots. "Street Roots is like family, and the customers I'm meeting are like family," Woodrow said. "I don't say much because it's kind of hard for me to trust people. I'm in a shell, and slowly, slowly, slowly I'm coming out. I'll get there eventually. Then people will see the funnier side of me and probably tell me to shut up."

While things are hard for the moment, Woodrow continues to apply what he learned from his grandfather and helps others.

"Not only do I have to look out for my well-being," he said, "I have to look out for my woman because I don't want anything bad to happen to her. I've got to be on the constant alert, so I'm not able to sleep when she does. And as long as she gets sleep, gets fed, that's all that matters to me."

He also helps others in the Portland community. The other day, he recalled, people were rushing toward the library doors, and a man bumped into an elderly woman who fell. "So I basically ran down the steps, almost hurting myself in the process, and I saved her. ... I was having a bad day, but that just changed it around."

Woodrow said that when his grandparents gave him his Indian names during a naming ceremony, "I felt very honored. I guess Grandpa and Grandma saw something in me that I've earned them."



Answers to Page 15 Puzzles

A	L	A	S	J	E	S	T	F	Y	K	E	
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9	1	3	4	8	5	7	6	2						

Sheeptoast

by Elizabeth Considine

