

T. Jacob Charles

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Thomas Jacob Charles or 'Nanockashee' is a Traditional Anishinabe knowledge keeper and teacher and cultural guide in his community of Chippewas of Georgina Island. Jacob has the honour of being a pipe carrier as well as a drum carrier for his community and is a fourth generation Maple Syrup maker. As owner of First Nation Cultural Tours he strives to provide First Nation culture through interactive and educational experiences to all of those in search of Canada's First Peoples.

Jacob began his journey as many First Nations people do, as a spiritually lost young man. At the age of twenty-two he went to Anishnabie Naadnaagi Gamig treatment centre for substance abuse. In this thirty day treatment Jacob began to learn what his role as an Anishinabe man and warrior was; He partook in a healing sweat; He was taught of traditional medicines and how to use them to overcome his personal weaknesses; He began learning his first language (Ojibway). However, within a year Jacob had relapsed back into alcohol abuse.

After checking himself back into treatment, Jacob fully realized his potential and strengths as an Anishinabe man. With these realizations in mind, he took the necessary steps to heal himself and in the process learn more about his Ojibway culture and his role within it. He joined the Enahtig healing lodge and learning centre in 2004 where he met his first elder and teacher, Hector Copegog (now one of the main chief that speak for the Medaiwin Lodge). Hector directed Jacob through many sweats and eventually his four day fast. Jacob was Hectors shkabaywis (fire keeper) for the sweats that he directed around Southern Ontario. From this role, Jacob was able to absorb many teachings about the sweat lodge.

In 2007, Jacob attended the "Assembly of First Nations National Chief to Attend Historic Three Fires Confederacy Gathering" in Garden River First Nation. This four day conference taught Jacob many things including; the history of First Nations People, Treaties, the Creation Story, Eagle Staffs, the Clan System, Fisheries and Harvesting, Traditional Governance and current political issues.

Jacob began singing around the Powwow drum as a means to an end (of alcoholism) and eventually joined the group at the Native Canadian Centre in Toronto. With this group he got his first taste for business. He participated in drum and dance demonstrations but felt the lack of actual teaching and explanation of First Nations Culture. So, feeling the need to share more with communities, Jacob began teachings on weekends to those who wanted to know more about First Nation Culture.

In 2012, Jacob made the decision to pursue his dream of sharing his culture with all nations in an effort to break down barriers and stereotypes. This meant quitting his job in construction and devoting every day to growing a tourism business on Georgina Island.

Throughout his long journey, Jacob has worked with (and continues to work with) many inspirational elders and people including: Hector Copegog, Pelly Mixemong, Vern Harper, Pat Green, Andrew Mixemong, Jim Dumont, John Snake, Don York, Charlie Warren, Ron Charles, Shelly Charles, Linol Taylor, Suzanne Smoke and Duke Redbird. He has participated in different ceremonies including the harvest ceremony and the sweet water ceremony as well as the recent repatriation of remains on Snake Island.

Jacob continues his teachings today with his elders and plans on offering his tobacco to become part of the Medaowin Lodge. By doing this, he will retain and expand on his teachings and knowledge seasonally. Jacob also actively visits other First Nations in a continued effort to learn not just his Ojibway culture but of all cultures.

Today, Jacob is the CEO and owner of First Nation Cultural Tours. He has decided to use his life as a mechanism to teach others about First Nations culture. His personal journey has given him a unique advantage when teaching others. Not only has he opened up his home and his life to those searching for answers, he provides guidance to Anishinabe Peoples from an understanding point of view.

Continuing along his traditional path, Jacob Charles and First Nation Cultural Tours will actively fight to provide knowledge in an interactive and educational way by seeking the answers to questions and listening to those willing to give him knowledgeable teachings.