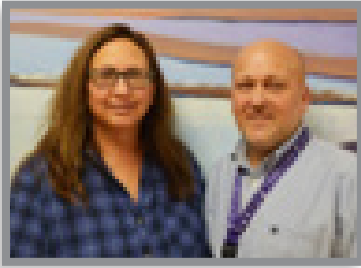


Human and Civil Rights Award Winner

◆ Rick & Lorie Erickson ◆

Leo Reano Memorial Award



Veteran Bayfield, Wisconsin educators Rick & Lorie Erickson have enriched the lives of children in the Native community they've become an integral part of.

In the district they serve, seventy-five percent of the student population is of the Anishinaabe Nation, indigenous to the Great Lakes region. As such, Rick and Lorie have developed a profound knowledge, respect and appreciation of the culture's past and present, working diligently towards the goal of fostering an environment where Native youth can celebrate their identity for generations to come.

Working in concert with the Bayfield school system and the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Rick and Lorie have advocated for Native traditions and heritage to be incorporated into the curriculum. Rick and Lorie not only understand how vital it is for these children to express themselves, but that it's equally important for those outside the culture to learn about those around them, towards the end of understanding and appreciation.

With many of the Anishinaabe student body existing below the poverty line, the Ericksons have worked to guarantee the community free or reduced priced lunch. Nourishing their bodies goes hand in hand with healing the soul; recognizing that much of the economic disparity stems from decades of historical trauma, they view their educational philosophy through the lens of cultural sensitivity. Their holistic approach has empowered and instilled a sense of pride in thousands of young people.

Rick and Lorie's efforts to embed themselves in the community are always on display: both have taken courses in the Anishinaabemowin language. Lorie's Early Childhood Special Education classrooms are consistently decorated with artwork that beautifully represents Anishinaabe life, and she creates activities for the children that include maple syruping, beading, and the rich tradition of storytelling, key to passing on lore, legacy, and history.

The Ericksons' efforts have been recognized locally: Rick was awarded the 2003 Excellence in Science Education Award by the Wisconsin Society of Science Teachers, and was named the 2014 High School Teacher of the Year. Lorie's forward-thinking concept of interfacing with tribal elders to guarantee culturally appropriate and effective programs for Native youth, garnered her recognition from the Wisconsin Indian Education Association.

Together, Rick and Lorie Erickson continue to make a better life for young people of all backgrounds in their community, so that no one ever forgets, to paraphrase the classic lyric, that "this land was made for you and me".