

WANEK HORN-MILLER

Waneek Horn-Miller is a Mohawk Olympian in the sport of water polo. She is from Kahnawake Mohawk Territory where she lived with her parents and three sisters. Waneek no longer competes as an athlete, but she has continued working in the sports world with many different careers. This summer she was a CBC host for the Olympic Games Paris 2024. Waneek is a role model when it comes to getting better and using your power for good.

Waneek still remembers the first time she thought about being an Olympic athlete. “I remember watching a fellow Mohawk Olympian Alwyn Morris win gold in 1984. I was a kid back then and my mom made me sit down and watch that. I had never seen anybody like me that was the best in the world. It was the first time I said I want to go to the Olympics, this is what I want to do.”

Her mother raised Waneek and her three sisters to always be excellent and the best at whatever they chose to do. “She started to fill my world up with stories about Alwyn Morris and Billy Mills, Sharon Firth and Shirly Firth-Larsson, Angela Chalmers. All these people who were Olympians and had excelled.”

We can learn from Waneek the importance of always improving and living a life of excellence. She wants you to remember that reaching your dreams doesn’t happen quickly. “Real things like dreams and goals, they take years and you may work your whole life getting there”. It is important to focus on the journey and the lessons you learn along the way. That is what really matters.

Waneek understands how important it is to include everybody so others see themselves being represented. “We need sport now more than ever. I am really looking forward to the day when I look at the Olympic team and see it really represent the people I see walking down the streets.”

Waneek loves to share what was the most meaningful and memorable part of her career while she was competing. “It was the opening ceremonies of the Pan Am Games and we were marching into the stadium and we were being escorted by fancy dancers and jingle dress dancers.” Then she looked up into the stands and saw all the regional chiefs from Manitoba sitting there. “It was like coming home. To be there, to be able to make them proud, then we went on and won gold.”

PHOTO BY CBC



Waneek wants to keep sharing her message of strength and inspire you to keep making the world a better place. She has important advice for anyone reading this who wants to improve and make a positive change. She knows it is important to think about how we will be remembered by future generations. “Just be somebody who is the change they want to see in the world. Don’t think someone else will do it.” Whatever it is that you are interested about, your hobbies, skills, use Waneek’s story to keep inspiring you.

Waneek has gone from being an athlete competing in the Olympics to many other careers within the sports world. Keep chasing your dreams because the world needs people like you in it! “There’s so many other careers in sports that are so rewarding. Just be that person that is passionate about it.”

GRADES K-3



LEARNING ACTIVITIES

LEARNING GOAL

Students will choose someone in their life that they look up to. Students will use examples shared in the story to help them think of examples in their life of how this person helps them keep improving and why they look up to them.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Language Arts, Writing, SEL

MATERIALS

- Waneek Horn-Miller Athlete story (one per student, per group or displayed somewhere all students can see)
- Sticky notes or whiteboards and markers
- Journals or notebooks
- Writing prompt
- Thank you note below for extension activity

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- If you could invent something to make playing your favourite sport easier or more fun, what would it be?
- Why is it important for everyone to have a chance to play sports and be seen as role models?
- What do you think it means to be excellent at something? What is one thing you think you are excellent at, or what is something you would like to be excellent at? What is one thing you can do today to start?
- In the story, Waneek shares a memory of when she saw fancy dancers, jingle dress dancers and the chiefs from her community when she was competing and it made her feel like she was at home. What kinds of people, traditions, or items make you feel at home?



LESSON PLAN

- 1. CONNECT:** Begin with a brief discussion on what a role model is. Ask students to share any initial thoughts on who they might consider a role model and why. Please share lots of different examples with your class on who this person can be. (Ex. parent, sibling, parent of a friend, coach, grandparent, aunt or uncle, teacher). Use examples from Waneek's story of how her mother was a role model and provided other role models for Waneek and her 3 sisters. To extend this activity, divide students into small groups and give them sticky notes or whiteboards. Ask each group to write down as many examples of role models as they can think of, inspired by the discussion and examples. Have each group share their sticky notes with the class, and place them on the whiteboard.
- 2. PROCESS:** Provide students with a prompt to reflect on: "Write down some examples from the story of the different ways Waneek's mother was a role model to her and encouraged her to be the best. Now, think of someone in your life that you look up to. How do they help you improve? Why do you admire them?" Allow students time to write a short essay or journal entry based on the prompt. Encourage them to use specific examples and stories to illustrate their points.
- 3. TRANSFORM:** Have students write a thank-you note or a letter of appreciation to their role model, explaining how they've inspired them. Encourage students to express gratitude and articulate the impact their role model has had on their lives. Encourage students to also reflect on the importance of expressing gratitude and how it can positively impact both the giver and the receiver.



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FEATURED ATHLETES

Waneek Horn-Miller

TRANSLATORS

Elite Communications

WRITERS

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GRAPHIC DESIGNERS

Leticia Spence



NAME: _____

DEAR,

I AM WRITING THIS NOTE TO YOU BECAUSE

THANK YOU FOR _____

FROM,

