

MONA ROYAL



M&R GAS AND BOYCHIEF TRADING POST
Siksika First Nation, Alberta

Mona Royal knows what it means to be part of a community, and treasures that. A proud business woman and mother, Mona says, "I find that serving others and meeting new people and creating friendships is the best part of starting a business."

And her very successful business, M & R Gas and Boy Chief Trading Post, is located in the heart of Blackfoot country in her home community of Siksika Nation in Alberta.

"There was a need to show off our peoples' crafts and artwork," states Mona, "our people are known for high quality beadwork."

So, in 2001, Mona and her partner Darryl had a vision to start a gas station, and a gift shop-style trading post. It began in an Atco trailer in 2002, and then the business started to grow. It wasn't long until she occupied a new, much larger space, and laughs when she describes how her first thoughts were about how to fill all that space.

But not before long, she did. "We showcase all kinds of crafts here," she says, "from Edmonton to Albuquerque, New Mexico, we have our people bringing their pieces here to sell."

The Trading Post is named in honour of her great grandfather and Blackfoot warrior, Boy Chief. As the story is told, Boy Chief was a great hero at a very young age, displaying great wisdom and compassion. He became a respected leader, a highly

regarded medicine man, a recognized statesman, and a shrewd businessman. He passed away at the age of 81, and the family keeps his legacy alive through his stories and legends, and the name, as well as the spirit, of the Trading Post.

And Mona continues to keep traditions and family close. With 6 children, the family keeps busy with the gas station and the trading post. "No one will ever take care of a building like you will if you own it," she laughs. "We're also getting our kids to a point, where if we ever leave, they know what to do." The business is built to continue to thrive, and support Indigenous artists, north to south.

After 23 years spent working with the Siksika Nation, from finance, to human resources, as well as 11 years working with Siksika Board of Education as the Transportation Supervisor, Mona created and opened her company. "From there it's history," she says, "it's a lot of hard work and dedication. But mostly, it's because we had faith."

Mona has a great deal of faith, as well as strength and passion to help others. After 15 years of running her own business, Mona has helped create and establish D & C Petroleum with her partner and spouse, Darryl McDonald. When asked what keeps her hungry for greater business adventure, Mona states,

"I take great pride in conceiving an idea and carrying it through to fruition. I consider myself privileged in the sense that I have grown in knowledge and experience and at the same time continued to serve my Nation in a positive way."

She says her favourite words are 'I believe'. Then she states, "When you can move yourself out of the way, then you can have faith."

The Indian Business Corporation helped Mona achieve her dream. Since 1987, the Corporation has provided access to capital for First Nations peoples, fostering opportunities for success and development.



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