

# A Hockey Dream Comes True

**H**ockey was as popular in residential schools as it is in schools today. Older children were sometimes allowed to listen to National Hockey League (NHL) games on a radio. Boys dreamed of being a hockey star.

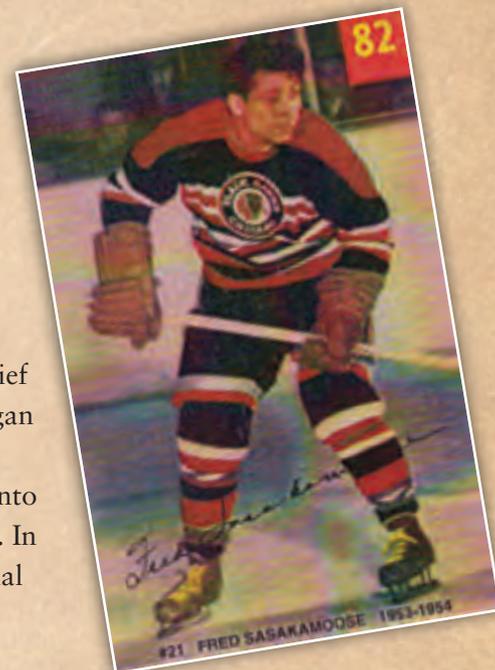
One Cree boy made the dream come true. His name was Frederick Sasakamoose, the first Canadian Aboriginal player in the NHL. Alexander, Fred's beloved grandfather, who could neither hear nor speak, taught him to skate on the Sandy Lake Reserve in Saskatchewan. In 1940, a truck took Fred and his older brother Frank to St. Michael's Indian Residential School in Duck Lake. Fred did not know where the truck was heading, nor why. All the seven-year-old boy knew was that he wanted to go home.

Fred skated throughout the lonely years at St. Michael's, encouraged by Father Georges Roussel, a priest at the Catholic school.

In the late 1940s, at the age of 15, Fred went to Moose Jaw to play junior hockey in the Western Hockey League for four years. By the time he was 20, he played in the NHL for the Chicago Black Hawks. He was seen on Hockey Night in Canada.

Fred played 11 games in the NHL. Then he went home, where he always wanted to be,

married, and continued to play hockey for several years. In 1980, he became chief of his reserve, stopped drinking, and began to heal from the loss he felt at school. In 2010, Fred Sasakamoose was inducted into the Saskatchewan Hockey Hall of Fame. In 2011, he received a prestigious Aboriginal Achievement Award. Fred and his wife Loretta are Elders at Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation (Sandy Lake) in Saskatchewan.



## JUST A FEELING

“I’m not First Nations so I went to a public school and lived at home. When I was in elementary school, our hockey team went to an away game to play against the Fort Frances Indian Residential School team. I remember feeling a sadness there in the kids. You see, us kids were brought to the game by our parents, and the residential school kids were alone. They held back, they didn’t open up to us.”

—Douglas G. Anderson, Fort Frances, Ontario



*Fred Sasakamoose (Cree), #21, played for the Chicago Black Hawks, 1953 to 1954. Fred Sasakamoose (above)*