



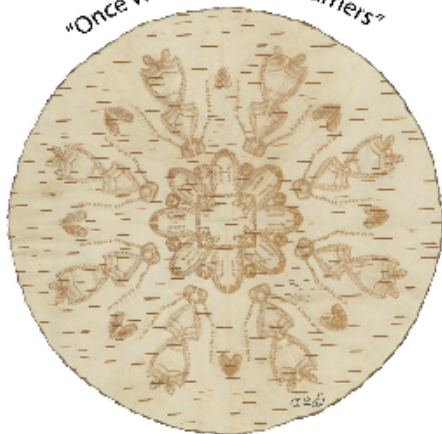
Native Women's  
Association of Canada



# NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA ANNUAL REPORT 2010-11



*"Once We Were Water Carriers"*



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**Delegate Name:**

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**Provincial Territorial Member Association:**

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## **Acknowledgements**

The Native Women's Association of Canada would like to thank the following organizations for their donation in the form of financial contributions, booth rental and gifts.

1. SOADI
2. ONWA
3. NAHO
4. CHRC
5. NOVOTEL OTTAWA
6. UNIGLOBE
7. EDMOND HARNDEN, BARRISTERS & SOLISITORS
8. COMMISSION FOR PUBLIC COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE RCMP

## Logo: Once We Were Water Carriers



[www.halfmoonstudios.com](http://www.halfmoonstudios.com)

Once We Were Water Carriers:

Tansi. My traditional name is Half Moon woman. I work in the medium of art called Birch Bark Biting. It is one of the oldest First Nations art forms. The art is done by transferring the images onto a single layer of Birch Bark using only my teeth. There are 4 elements used to create my art work: water, earth, wind, and fire.

I too suffer from the loss of loved ones who are missing or who have been murdered. So to honour them and all our loved ones who are missing or have passed, I would like to donate my image to raise money to support this cause that plagues our First Nation women, families, and communities.

Once we were water carriers is the name of this piece which represents the murdered and missing women. That they had the ability to carry life. Water being one of our most important medicines. The four inner hearts represent the 4 stages of life they didn't get to live out. The tear drops represent the many tears that have been shed for them. The hearts represent they were loved, missed and will continue to live on in our hearts. The jingle dress dancers represent that they are now sacred jingle dancers in the Spirit world. The birch bark is paper variety which is Indigenous to Turtle Island just like our people.

All My Relations, Half Moon

(P. Bruderer)

## Table of Contents

### Contents

Acknowledgements.....	2
Logo: Once We Were Water Carriers.....	3
Table of Contents.....	4
NWAC’S MISSION/OBJECTIVES/VISION .....	5
MISSION STATEMENT .....	5
OBJECTIVES .....	5
VISION .....	5
Board of Directors 2011.....	7
President’s Message .....	9
Presidents Report .....	11
Executive Director’s Report .....	16
Sector Reports.....	20
Evidence to Action .....	20
Health And Environment Departments .....	25
Department of International Affairs & Human Rights.....	29
Labour Market Development.....	33

## **NWAC'S MISSION/OBJECTIVES/VISION**

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

To help empower women by being involved in developing and changing legislation which affects them, and by involving them in the development and delivery of programs promoting equal opportunity for Aboriginal women.

### **OBJECTIVES**

The principles or objectives of the Native Women's Association of Canada are as follows:

- to be the national voice for Native women;
- to address issues in a manner which reflects the changing needs of Native women in Canada;
- to assist and promote common goals towards self-determination and self-sufficiency for Native peoples in our role as mothers and leaders;
- to promote equal opportunities for Native women in programs and activities;
- to serve as a resource among our constituency and Native communities;
- to cultivate and teach the characteristics that are unique aspects of our cultural and historical traditions;
- to assist Native women's organizations, as well as community initiatives in the development of their local projects; and,
- to advance issues and concerns of Native women; and to link with other Native organizations with common goals.

### **VISION**

We have a vision of Aboriginal communities where all individuals have an opportunity to develop their talents in order to achieve their full potential.

We see communities where all people can lead healthy lifestyles by maintaining balance in their spiritual, emotional, mental and physical health.

To build a sense of pride and a strong identification of who they are. They constantly seek to broaden their knowledge of the things that affect them and their relationship with the environment and the land.

We see communities where all our people have an opportunity to learn our history and traditional ways while attaining a high level of academic education with children to be proud of who they are and to be comfortable in a predominantly non-Aboriginal environment.

We see a community where all Aboriginal people accept and exercise their responsibilities to contribute to a strong community. We also envision an Aboriginal community that understands and respects the diversity and uniqueness of all Aboriginal nations.

A community which communicates with each other and works in unity with all Aboriginal organizations to ensure a strong voice in maintaining Aboriginal and treaty rights. This is a community which assumes responsibility in selecting leaders who will be youth and following generations.

Finally we see an Aboriginal community which determines how our natural resources are utilized and can co-exist in co-operation with society - free of racism and discrimination

## Board of Directors 2011

<p><u>President</u> Jeannette Corbiere-Lavell</p>	<p><u>1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President</u> (New Brunswick) Sarah Rose</p>
<p><u>2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President</u> (Quebec) Michele Audette</p>	<p><u>Treasurer</u> (Saskatchewan) Judy Hughes</p>
<p><u>Secretary</u> (Northwest Territory) Marilyn Napier</p>	<p><u>Newfoundland</u> Dorothy George</p>
<p><u>Prince Edward Island</u> Judy Clark</p>	<p><u>Nova Scotia</u> Cheryl Maloney</p>
<p><u>Ontario</u> Dr. Dawn Harvard</p>	<p><u>Manitoba</u> Susie McPherson</p>
<p><u>Alberta</u> Ruth Kidder</p>	<p><u>Yukon</u> Lorraine O'Brien</p>



<p><u>East Elder</u> Agnes Potter</p>	<p><u>South Elder</u> Elize Hartley</p>
<p><u>West Elder</u> Noreen McAteer</p>	<p><u>North Elder</u> Winnie Greenland</p>
<p><u>East Youth Representative</u> Sara Lynne Knockwood</p>	<p><u>South Youth Representative</u> Karen Gott</p>
<p><u>West Youth Representative</u> Kari-Dawn Wuttunee</p>	<p><u>North Youth Representative</u> Amanda Mudry</p>

## President's Message

Dear Delegates/Members of NWAC:

Another year has gone by and I must admit that it seems just a short while ago that we were all gathered in the main hall at our 35th AGA held last Sept. 2010.

I wish to welcome all especially as I know that it is a big commitment to take the time, energy and initiative to leave your families, work and communities to come to Ottawa to share, discuss and make resolutions on behalf of our women and families. The overall situation in regards to Aboriginal peoples, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples in Canada, does not bode very well for our rights and interests. It means that we, as Aboriginal Women and members of all our Provincial and Territorial Organizations across Canada must and will need to be even more diligent in advocating and speaking on behalf of our sisters in our communities.

I am looking forward to hearing your concerns, listening to your advice and guidance and taking directions on how, why and what action we should proceed to take over the next 12 months. This is a time for sharing, supporting each other and most importantly for planning for the future of our generations to come.

I am especially reminded of our role as Aboriginal women, as mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters, guardians, to be the nurturers, care givers, teachers and role models for our children as I hold and rock my newest granddaughter, Rhiannon River, born August 12, 2011.

It is especially fitting that we have as our theme "Once We Were Water Carriers," along with the beautiful and most appropriate art work depicting our sacred role as protectors of the "Waters" of Mother Earth. I am also so pleased that we anticipate the attendance of our Grandmother Josephine Mandamin, the originator of the "Water Walks" at our AGA. It is important that we acknowledge and honour our Grandmother Josephine for her tireless and dedicated commitment to bringing awareness and education to all people on the state of our water and environment on Turtle Island.

Every day, we hear more and more on the impact of global warming on our environment and yet governments at all levels do not appear to take these messages to heart. We, as Aboriginal Women, members of the Native Women's Association of Canada, will need to take a strong stand on protecting the waters of our lands, to ensure that our children, the seven generations to come have a future, a place to live, a safe, healthy and nourishing environment to enable them to grow strong and be the future leaders, warriors, healers and good human beings that we are taught within our teachings and traditions.

We will have many issues to discuss, resolve and recommend for action over the next two days of our Annual Assembly and I know that with the help and guidance of our Grandmothers from the 4 directions - Agnes Potter, Eastern region, Elize Hartley, Southern region, Noreen McAteer, Western region and Winnie Greenland, Northern region - we will be able to accomplish this with their prayers, offerings and intercession to the Creator on our behalf.

My best wishes to all and I look forward to a productive, supportive and good Annual Assembly.

Jeannette Corbiere Lavell

President

## Presidents Report

### Native Women's Association of Canada, President's Report Annual General Assembly, Ottawa, ON. August 27 & 28, 2011

#### **"Once We Were Water Carriers"**

**To:** Provincial and Territorial Member Associations  
**From:** Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, President  
**Re:** Major Issues, Events and Activities, September 2010 to August 2011

This report summarizes NWAC's achievements and focuses on the personal contributions I have made in raising the profile of Aboriginal women's issues as the President of NWAC, at the national and international levels. The NWAC Board of Directors met several times in the months following our last Annual General Assembly in September 2010, and while I have been provided opportunity to update you during those meetings, this report is intended to recap my activities in their entirety.

***I wish to extend my sincere congratulations to our national youth representative, Amanda Mudry from the Yukon Native Women's Association on being selected as the National Youth Representative for NWAC.***

Amanda was commended at a special gathering in Ottawa for exceptional service to Canadian youth by way of invitation from the Governor General and the Prime Minister during Prince William and Kate Middleton, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, visit to Canada.

***Congratulations also to the newly elected Executive Council members,***

- ***Sara Rose, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President***
- ***Michelle Audette, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President***
- ***Judy Hughes, Treasurer***
- ***Marilyn Napier, Secretary***

Each of you has demonstrated leadership by assuming their respective roles in times of need and with little notice. I especially wish to thank and acknowledge Sara Rose on assuming the Co-Chair role at the National Forum on Violence held in Vancouver, BC in June 2011. She did an exceptional job. Miigwetch.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express not only my gratitude but those of all NWAC staff, to the many Board Members who have been so generous with their time, energy and expertise in volunteering to work on the many committees and programmes of NWAC. Miigwetch.

**Evidence to Action (formerly Sisters in Spirit):** NWAC was successful in securing a three-year contribution from the Status of Women Canada to move forward on our succeeding action plan titled "*Evidence to Action*". This plan of action was developed specifically to follow-up on the work of the SIS initiative emphasizing more community awareness, public education, and community mobilization. NWAC will deliver training to police and public services including various security agencies. Of utmost importance in this phase is the continued support and guidance we take from the families of missing and murdered Aboriginal Women. NWAC will once again host a gathering of families who have lost a loved one.

**Commission of Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women BC:** When the call for representatives of missing and murdered women in the Robert Picton case inquiry created by the BC Government was released, we immediately made a submission to speak on behalf of the Sisters in Spirit families. It is recognized that with the data, expertise, and stories gathered over years of working on the Sisters in Spirit initiative that we could uniquely contribute and give voice to the many missing and murdered Aboriginal women not only in British Columbia but from across Canada. Commissioner Wally Oppal recognized the importance of our contributions and not only granted us full standing (NWAC is the only Aboriginal Organization to receive this status), but recommended to the BC Attorney General that we be funded fully to participate. In response to this recommendation, we immediately struck an agreement with two well-known reputable lawyers, Gwen Brodsky and Katherine Herschel, to act as counsel. Unfortunately due to forces beyond our control the Attorney General refused to accept the recommendation of the Commissioner and in the end, denied funding to NWAC, and many other interested parties. Interestingly the lawyers for the policing services, government departments, and security agencies have been fully funded.

The Attorney General's decision was disappointing to say the least. It has caused significant anguish not only at NWAC but for all the other community groups and organizations that were also denied funding. After much discussion and brainstorming on options, we, like many others, made the difficult decision to withdraw from the Commission of Inquiry. Despite this major setback we have resolved to continue seeking justice for our women and girls. Acting on the advice and guidance of the Board and PTMA's, NWAC publically called for a National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women.

Background information, letters to the Premier and to the Commissioner, media releases, and subsequent events and media commentaries are available on our website.

**NATIONAL ABORIGINAL WOMAN'S FORUM: June 15-17, 2011 Theme: We Are Courageous and We are Healing Ourselves** Following the SIS Family Gathering in Vancouver last November 2010, I met with the Deputy Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation and representatives from each of the National Aboriginal Organizations (NAO's) and local Aboriginal organizations to discuss the planning and organizing of a major national forum on Violence against Aboriginal Women.

After months and with the assistance of our staff in BC the National Forum came together in June. It was highly successful with recommendations and strategies that are intended to bring about an end to violence against Aboriginal women. A full report on outcomes will be available on our website.

**United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples, May 16-20, 2011:** The Director of International Affairs and Human Rights secured support for NWAC to attend the pre-session and official opening of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples held in New York City. We delivered statements on behalf of Aboriginal women in Canada on issues of human rights, equality, access to economic development opportunities, the right to appropriate education and training, and above all, our right to live in an environment free from violence and abuse. Aboriginal women's crucial role in ensuring children's safety and wellbeing was central in our address. We spoke to our responsibility to provide opportunities for our children to learn their traditions and cultures. Finally, our role as protectors of the waters of Mother Earth was underpinned by a commitment we made to raise awareness within the global community of the issue of water. The presentation made is available on our website.

**Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Geneva, Switzerland, July 11-15, 2011:** NWAC made several presentations related to education and Aboriginal women's traditional role as knowledge keepers. Our main message centered on access to education and linking this to poverty. The mitigation of poverty in our communities, access to nutrition, and safe housing is the first step towards ensuring that our children can obtain a good education and grow into strong and independent young adults - the leaders of tomorrow. We had opportunity to meet privately with the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and raised the issue of the lack of funding for our participation in the Commission of Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Women in BC.

**Indigenous Women's Symposium, Morelos, Mexico, March 4-7, 2011:** NWAC attended a special symposium on the Rights of Indigenous Women from Central and South America held in Northern Mexico where we had an opportunity to meet, share and exchange ideas on dealing with common needs and issues as Indigenous women of the Americas. It was a unique learning experience not only for me but for our Indigenous sisters to create networks in moving our agenda forward.

**Canadian Council of the Federation, Vancouver, B.C. July 19-21, 2011:** As one of the five NAO's participating in the annual gathering of Premiers on Aboriginal issues NWAC persistently brought attention to our mandate to stop violence against women and girls stressing the importance of a safe and healthy environment. There was unanimous agreement that NAWS III should occur and some discussion around it being hosted and co-ordinated by the Province of Manitoba in collaboration with NWAC in 2012. The main goal and theme of this summit would be on the elimination of violence against Aboriginal women and girls and would be specific in areas of focus and application.

**Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC):** Alongside our brother NAO's, NWAC worked with and addressed the Ministers of Education from across Canada on the unique education needs of our women and girls. We have followed up on a survey titled "Key Policy Issues in Aboriginal Education: an Evidence-Based Approach" with Jane Friesen, Centre for Education Research and Policy Simon Fraser University. Our presentation to CMEC is available on our website for your information.

**Special Meeting with the Prime Minister of Canada: Parliament Offices:** NWAC was invited to a special meeting with the Prime Minister to discuss Canada's Economic Development Plan for Aboriginal People. NWAC stressed that the importance of Aboriginal women's equal access to economic opportunities. Underpinning this is our basic right to education, to clean water and good nutrition and to a safe and healthy environment. It was also stated that in our tradition and prior to colonization, our women had equality and shared in the decision making for the well-being of our communities.

**National Council of Women of Canada, Winnipeg, May 3-5, 2011:** At the invitation of the President, Mary Scott, I made a special presentation to their AGA on our work on Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and our Evidence to Action programme. In support to our call to action to stop violence against our women and girls the Assembly of the National Council drafted a National Declaration on the issue. All delegates including Chief Francine Meeches, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs signed the Declaration.

The National Council of Women of Canada is a member of the International Council of Women, accredited with the United Nations' Economic and Social Council's Commission on the Status of Women and is linked with 77 Councils and member groups in Canada. A copy of Declaration is available on our website.

**Women's Worlds 2011 – A Global convergence to advance women's equality through research, exchange, leadership and action, Ottawa-Gatineau, 3-7 July 2011:** Approximately 2000 women from around the world participated in this International event. Aboriginal women from a variety of professional backgrounds including political, academic, activists, and elders were joined in workshops and special presentations. It was gratifying to have close to 1000 women in the Solidarity March to Parliament Hill to seek justice and give voice to all the missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. Families who lost loved ones were also in the march and Maisie Thomas spoke about the disappearance of her daughter and friend from Maniwaki, Quebec. Inuit, Metis and First Nation Elders offered prayers and support.

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The brief summaries above are a highlight only of the important work of NWAC over the past year. There were many other presentations, speaking engagements, and media events where I

had opportunity to raise awareness of Aboriginal women's issues and perspectives. I am more than happy to provide more detail on these at any time. Additional information can be found in the Program and the Executive Directors' reports. It has been a very busy year once again but after a short holiday I am revitalized and ready for another challenging year of work on behalf of our women and girls.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, President



## **Executive Director's Report**

(This annual report covers the period from September 2010, to July 2011).

There have been many notable and significant events and activities that have occurred over the past year that have served to underscore the very important role that NWAC has maintained over the past 36<sup>+</sup> years in both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal political environment. As the only officially recognized political voice for Aboriginal women in Canada, the demands put on the organization to address all issues, whether these be social, political or cultural in nature, are numerous and never-ending. NWAC is firmly recognized at the local, regional, national and international levels for its expertise in all of the aforementioned areas. This report will serve to highlight the activities at the national office that will give you, the reader, an insight into what the association has and continues to address on a daily and annual basis as it strives to improve the lives of Aboriginal women and strives to achieve equality with their male counterparts as well as with the rest of women in Canadian society.

This report will highlight the major areas that NWAC addresses more or less on a continual basis. These areas include: Evidence to Action (spin-off of the five-year SIS Initiative); Health and Environment; International Affairs and Human Rights; and, Labour Market Development. A synopsis of the work being carried out within each sector has been developed by each Director and is included in this report.

My report will focus on the broader political activities that NWAC had to respond to in the past year. I will present them in a monthly format notwithstanding the fact that as the Executive Director, my role is also to manage the daily running of the national office including most Human Resources issues, which take up a significant portion of my time.

Most of September 2010 was taken up by the planning and organizing of the 36<sup>th</sup> AGA, which took place at the end of that month. The AGA resolutions that were put forward guide the work that NWAC is to do for the next year and myself and the staff do our utmost to see that they are followed. A resolutions report has been developed to apprise you on the progress of the work commenced or completed on each and has been provided to each of you, the delegates.

In October NWAC senior staff and senior officials from INAC and Status of Women Canada (SWC) met to discuss how we could further develop a good working relationship with these two departments as well as with other federal departments that NWAC does business with. The federal government representatives expressed their support in helping NWAC move its agenda

forward and if possible to decrease the time-consuming reporting demands put on NWAC. In addition, other meetings were held with top-level SWC staff during the month of October to address the misunderstanding that took place as a result of the termination of the SIS Initiative in March 2010.

I also had the opportunity in October to attend the National Think Tank on the Prevention of Domestic Violence conference that took place at Western University in London, ON. A staff person from SIS also attended and presented on the work carried out during the five-year SIS Initiative phase.

In November, I established contact with the Telfer School of Business Management from Ottawa University to assist me to get things in order at the national office. Work on the development of a strategic plan, on financial and human resources policies and assistance to help clarify the association's by-laws began and has continued throughout this year. A great deal of effort, by NWAC's senior staff and Board of Directors, was made to get these foundational documents in good order for the association.

A BOD's meeting was also convened November 7-8, 2010 in Ottawa. And, in the latter part of the month, the NWAC president and I met with the AFN national chief to speak on the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and the UNDRIP, which are two issues that are of concern to both organizations.

I attended the AFN Chiefs meeting in December where the NWAC president addressed the Chiefs on the issue of missing and murdered women.

Major happenings in January included staff lay-offs which took place in the former SIS department. This was a major incident at the national office and caused much insecurity and upheaval amongst all the staff and was a trying time for all of us. I am glad to report that the work place is once again stable and secure and staff turn-over is low.

NWAC had a director's retreat which took place January 25-26 in Wakefield, Quebec. The goal of the retreat was to work with a consultant from the Telfer School of Business Management to develop a draft strategic plan for NWAC, which is now completed and will be presented here at the AGA.

In February, a meeting was held with top-level policy advisors to Minister Ambrose of SWC to re-establish a better working relationship with that department in light of the misunderstanding with SIS. I believe that a better working relationship now exists between both organizations. I also met with an official from Public Safety to discuss NWAC's work in the area of missing and murdered women and to inquire about funding from this department. I

accompanied the NWAC president who made a presentation to the Standing Committee on the subject of SIS on Parliament Hill. Also in February, a meeting was convened at the NWAC office with the Acting Director of the Canadian Human Rights Commission to speak about the CHR Act and its application in First Nations communities.

At the end of the month, the NWAC president and I presented at the Urban Aboriginal Strategy working group on the issue of SIS in Toronto.

March is the month when many fiscal year-end administrative duties must be attended to such as finalizing expenditures and reports etc. In addition to the many activities related to closing a fiscal year, I organized and planned an executive committee and BOD meeting that was held at the end of March in Ottawa. A day was set aside to review the work that had been done on the draft Strategic Plan and the by-laws.

In April, a meeting was called with senior INAC officials to discuss NWAC's list of on-going and potential projects for the current fiscal year. The director of International Affairs and Human Rights and I made a formal presentation to the Canadian Labour Congress representatives about NWAC. I also attended and participated at the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of Aboriginal Affairs Ministers and NAO leaders in Ottawa.

I attended the CMEC meeting in Toronto in May, with the NWAC president and another staff person and attended the United Nations sessions for Indigenous Peoples from May 12<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> in New York.

With NWAC being the co-host of the Violence against Aboriginal Women Forum in Vancouver, June 14-17, I helped to plan and organize this event with the conference organizers. Many teleconferences were held in preparation of this major event. Most of NWAC's BODs attended this very successful event.

July was a very busy month. Also being on the planning and organizing committee of the Women's World 2011, I attended many of its sessions that were held over a five-day period from July 3-7, here in Ottawa. Following this, and also being involved in the planning of this other major event, I attended the COF meeting in Vancouver that took place July 20<sup>th</sup>.

I would also like to mention that NWAC is adamantly pursuing funding to establish an economic development and education sector within the organization. Hopefully, these will be set up in the current fiscal year and will be reported on in the next Annual Report. The above information will serve to highlight some of the major activities that I am directly involved in, however, I cannot end without thanking and expressing my heartfelt gratitude to the President, the BODs and the staff for the support they've given me in the past year to carry out the association's

affairs. I also want to thank those government officials, too numerous to mention but who know who they are, who have helped me in my work at NWAC and who are truly committed to advancing and improving the life of Aboriginal women.

Thank you, migwech, merci

Claudette Dumont-Smith

Executive Director

## Sector Reports

### Evidence to Action

#### **Overview:**

The objective of the Evidence to Action (ETA) project is to strengthen the ability of communities, governments, educators and service providers to respond to issues of violence against Aboriginal women and girls; and to develop tools to support Aboriginal women, girls, families and communities to develop violence prevention strategies and respond to experiences of violence. The ETA is organized under four key thematic areas: education, tools for communities, partnerships, and community responsiveness. The underlying goal of the work undertaken through this project is to reduce and eventually eliminate the violence that is experienced by Aboriginal women and girls.

#### **Activities and Accomplishments:**

Activities over the 2010/11 fiscal year focused on addressing the root causes of violence through the application of knowledge based actions and responses gained during the Sisters in Spirit initiative. These activities put into motion, as the name of this project states, knowledge and evidence gained into action.

The NWAC President, Executive Director, and Evidence to Action director and staff have continued to maintain an active role and presence in relation to the high levels of violence experienced by Aboriginal women and girls and addressing the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. Presentations are wide and varied, and take place at all levels: national, regional, and local as well as international. Audiences include communities, students, academia, police, service providers, policy and decision makers, key stakeholders, partners, government and government committees, and international bodies (such as the United Nations).

#### **October 4<sup>th</sup> Sister In Spirit Vigils:**

A total of 84 vigils were planned, organized and conducted on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010 right across Canada – exceeding the planned goal of 75 vigils, demonstrating the success of NWAC in developing partnerships with individuals, communities, agencies, and organizations. Vigils were held in every province and territory. One international vigil was organized in 2010 that testifies to the success of NWAC's work in developing international partnerships with Indigenous women and their organizations. NWAC developed tools and resources for

communities/individuals to plan, organize and conduct a vigil and made these available across Canada and internationally. These tools and materials included publication and media templates and suggestions for visual media. NWAC managed a central registry of all vigils, and established a Face book page for vigil organizers, prepared media advisories, media releases and messages from key partners for organizers to use.

**Family Gathering:**

A family gathering was held on November 25-28, 2010 in Vancouver, BC with 50 people in attendance including family members, support persons and Elders. This family gathering was structured to reach those who have been directly impacted by the loss of a loved one to violence. This gathering captured information on the needs of family members who are dealing with a situation of a missing or murdered Aboriginal woman or girl, and laid the groundwork for developing tools to respond to these needs. This information enabled NWAC to develop a new conceptual tool based on the input from families about the gaps in victim services and other programs designed to address the needs of victims of violence; this tool will assist communities and key stakeholders to assess their current programs and services against the needs of families who have lost a loved one to violence.

**New families and new Life Stories:**

Throughout this period NWAC continued to hear of new missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls, and made contact with new families who have lost a loved one. The information provided by family members continue to inform our knowledge and thinking about these issues. Preliminary ground work was undertaken with some family members for gathering new stories. In this regard, respect is given to the family members and their readiness to engage with NWAC and is not dictated by any organizational calendar or schedule.

**Knowledge to Action Days:**

During this reporting period three full-day "think tank" sessions were conducted in Fredericton, Ottawa and Winnipeg. These sessions enabled NWAC to present its research and policy findings, and enabled participants to identify potential partnerships and the tools required to implement solutions to the issues. The primary objective of this activity was to open a discussion on moving from knowledge to action with a group of key stakeholders. The evaluation process served to identify participant learning during the session as well as an idea generator in identifying gaps in knowledge and future educational activities.

### **Community Engagement Workshops:**

Several workshops were held throughout the period across Canada with the purpose of serving as venues for the exchange of information and ideas and enabled NWAC to present information and knowledge gained during the Sisters in Spirit Initiative and first phase of the ETA. Participants gained insight into how NWAC's knowledge and expertise could broaden the context of their own activities, programming and services, and were educated by one another about existing services and programs, as well as gaps, key issues and current priorities. The workshops proved reciprocal as NWAC gained knowledge during these sessions that both informed subsequent workshops and contributed to the organizations overall expertise and knowledge of the issues.

### **Partnership Development and Collaboration:**

This activity occurred throughout the reporting period on a variety of levels, and included the development of several memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and partnership activities with NWAC Provincial Territorial Member Associations for data sharing. NWAC also participated in key leadership and decision making forums, and worked directly with the Council of the Federation, The Council of Ministers of Education Canada, the Economic Development Working Group, the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group, the BC Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, and the Aboriginal Women's Economic Roundtable. Existing partnerships were maintained and strengthened and include close and mutually supportive relationships such as KAIROS, Amnesty International, NWAC PTMAs, and National Aboriginal Organizations.

### **NWAC Supporters & Outcomes:**

Changes within the NWAC and its projects resulted in the need to acknowledge unintended/unplanned outcomes that could not have otherwise been recognized. During times of change, organizations are better able to assess how their work has impacted society on a broad scale. The move from the Sisters in Spirit (SIS) initiative to the Evidence to Action (ETA) project enabled NWAC to recognize how deeply engrained SIS was to communities and the wider Canadian society. The perceived threat to the SIS initiative prompted a large outpouring of support and praise for the work NWAC has done on this issue. In addition, SIS outcome measures to educate and inform were realized as a wide variety of agencies, organizations, ministries and departments utilized SIS research and data for reference use in their own publications, media releases, information bulletins and handouts.

### **Next Steps:**

As the ETA project moved from the first phase to the second phase some challenges were experienced and effectively addressed by the NWAC executive. Currently, the ETA project is

moving forward with activities and deliverables planned as per funding agreements. The focus is on community based resources, education, and engagement to reduce the level of violence experienced by Aboriginal women. The activities incorporate education, tools for communities, reaching out to new partners, and building capacity for community responsiveness. The resources developed, disseminated and evaluated during the ETA project will build on the extensive work conducted over the past five years and ensure Aboriginal women, families, communities, leaders and service providers have targeted resources to respond to violence.

An analogy of the work that NWAC has done on these issues can be visualized as that of a great eagle birthing and nurturing the growth of an egg to eaglette (SIS) and now as that young eagle begins to stretch its wings and prepare for flight, the mother eagle scans the skies and introduces her young to the world as the young eagle soars forward (ETA). So too has NWAC's role evolved from the preparatory work, foundation building, education and research of the Sisters In Spirit initiative to resource and tool development, structure, and substance of the Evidence to Action project.

The ETA project has been active in this fiscal period, and will continue with both new and familiar activities such as:

- SIS vigils on October 4<sup>th</sup> across Canada;
- Annual family gathering in November 2011;
- the production of new life stories;
- the dissemination of tools and resources and the evaluation of the community resource guide;
- community engagement workshops;
- the development and pilot of a clinical tool for practitioners to respond to the experiences of violence faced by Aboriginal women;
- partnership development and collaboration.

Recent activities of note include the "Collaboration to End Violence" National Aboriginal Women's Forum on June 15-17, 2011 in Vancouver, BC. The forum was co-hosted by the Native Women's Association of Canada and the Province of British Columbia. The agenda, which included leading practices, lessons learned and strategies for future action was organized into three key thematic areas: prevention of violence, intervention, and post-incident support for victims and their families. A public ceremony was held in the Vancouver Downtown Eastside on June 15, 2011, to honour the First Nation, Métis and Inuit women and girls who have been the victims of violence, and to celebrate the strengths and resiliency of their families, and of First



Nation, Métis and Inuit women and girls more generally, with the Province of BC. The forum had 250 registrants and included 15 NWAC delegates; 275-300 people participating in the public ceremony.

Irene Goodwin  
Director of Evidence to Action

## Health And Environment Departments

### Overview:

The Health and Environment Departments are grounded by a collective holistic vision to support and promote the health and wellbeing of our women, their families, communities, and nations for the safety and security of our children, our grandchildren, and future generations. These departments seek ongoing guidance from an advisory committee structure in the pursuit of more sustainable funding arrangements, broadening our network of support beyond the scope of our Federal partners. We proudly work with community experts building upon a foundation of strength and wisdom that stems from inherent right and our unique relationship with the Creator.

The following projects were completed within the Health and Environment Departments in the past fiscal year. A brief summary of each project is outlined below.

The ***Arresting the Legacy: From Prisons to Residential Schools*** dialogue toolkit is a 30 page booklet with seven toolkit inserts to raise awareness about the crisis of over incarceration of Aboriginal women and girls within Canada's criminal justice system. The toolkit was informed by the diverse expertise of the advisory committee members and includes case studies of local Aboriginal and restorative justice positive reconciliation practices. It also examines the ongoing challenges in regards to the rights of criminalized Aboriginal women and girls, while promoting increased public engagement through reconciliation dialogues involving multi stakeholders working with Aboriginal women and girls in conflict with the law. The printed version is expected to be available for distribution by mid-June 2011.

A ***Public Service Announcement*** and ***Resource Guide*** were developed as part of the Grandmother Spirit project, undertaken to raise awareness about issues of senior abuse among senior Aboriginal women in Canada. The project had two stages: Gathering knowledge (research) and sharing knowledge (raising awareness). Research circles, an Aboriginal approach to information gathering, were used to bring Grandmothers from across the country together to collect stories and learn from their life experience and wisdom. Sharing knowledge from the project involved the development of public service announcements (PSAs) to be aired on television and online. In addition to the PSAs and posters, the stories shared by the Grandmothers helped to ground a resource booklet. This project was guided by an Advisory Committee composed of Elders, community members, service providers and academics, and included youth participation.

The ***On My Way: Aboriginal Women Caring for Community as a Personal Support Worker*** guide book provides "hard to reach" Aboriginal women with practical information to assist in achieving their goals of pursuing a career in health. The career of Personal Support Worker (PSW) is one that is easily accessible, requires less than one year to complete, and is in high demand given the Canadian demographic and the increased need in home-care, long-term care

homes, and in the hospital sector. Hard to reach Aboriginal women include low income, single moms of all ages, those who may not have completed high school, those who struggle with addictions and mental health issues, and those who may have a criminal record. The guide book is easy to read, visually appealing, and small enough to fit into a purse. It is culturally relevant and reflects Aboriginal values and traditional teachings. Its instructional format is intended to motivate the reader and inspire them to give back to their community by doing what comes naturally.

The ***Culturally Relevant Gender Based Analysis: Principles for Health System Transitions*** is an analysis of the transition of Canada's health care system as it has emerged over the last decade promoting Aboriginal women's perspectives within health systems transition. The paper includes an in depth analysis of Health Canada's Aboriginal Health Transition Fund (AHTF, 2005-2010) and the challenges related to incorporating culture and gender into local health transition program development. It offers a case study on the application of CRGBA in relation to Aboriginal women's reproductive health in Canada. It details an alarming history of contraception policies including sexual sterilization and the detrimental impacts these policies have had on Aboriginal women's health more broadly.

Work on the FASD file has goals of encouraging support for early detection of FASD and breaking the cycle of prenatal alcohol use within the Aboriginal community. This work was initiated with a ***preliminary study investigating the linkages between FASD, gangs, sexual exploitation and woman abuse in the Canadian Aboriginal Population***. A collaborative research effort brought about the development of a paper that was published in the First Peoples Child & Family Review in November 2010. To supplement this research an ***environmental scan of FASD programs*** was completed in March 2011 that further investigated these linkages. The scan examined programs and services across Canada and collected information through a series of key informant interviews. A qualitative methodology was used to analyze the interview data which enabled the identification of systematic patterns. The research focused on Aboriginal persons 30 years of age and younger who have been affected by prenatal alcohol use and included mothers who consumed alcohol while pregnant. A series of recommendations were produced including what might be the next phase of this research, and that is to build the knowledge base on the experiences of FASD women and young people by conducting a qualitative study with gang-involved and/or sexually exploited participants.

The ***Diabetes Self-Management Toolkit*** is comprised of six booklets and two fact sheets that provide a comprehensive set of information and resources for Aboriginal families living with diabetes. It is a practical multi-faceted guide that came about as part of NWAC's ***Diabetes Action Plan***, emphasizing a culturally relevant gender based approach to managing type 2 Diabetes. It is intended to increase the family's knowledge and awareness, and promote prevention. It offers families easy to use tools and tips to adopt a healthy lifestyle with diet and exercise as central elements. A unique aspect of the toolkit is the promotion of traditional foods. It offers several recipes and easy instructions for cooking high protein wild and store bought meats, in addition to cornerstone recipes such as "three sister's soup", wild rice, and fry

bread. This toolkit has been a work in progress, building on advice, insight and content suggestions from Aboriginal women from across Canada.

The ***Mental Wellness and Young Aboriginal Women and Girls in Vulnerable Situations*** research paper provides an analysis of mental health programs available to Aboriginal youth and provides a series of recommendations for change. Information was collected using Aboriginal approaches to research (i.e., sharing circles), through a survey of key informants, and from outcomes from a “meeting of experts”. The research is intended to inform mental wellness policy and programming and guide the development of strategies for knowledge translation among stakeholders.

The ***Daughter Spirit in Action - Guidebook*** is a resource tool intended to bring youth and elders together to build relationships through the development of local programs and activities. It is an instructional guide and offers examples of several different types of activities, traditional and non-traditional (for example, beading or drum making, or volleyball or karaoke), that young people can engage in in their communities to create positive experiences, building mental health protective factors. Elders can take on any number of roles, offering words to ground the activity in a teaching and ensure youth interact and conduct themselves in a good way.

An analysis and application of the CRGAP was completed of Environment Canada's ***Species at Risk policies***. This paper brought about the compilation of a series of specific recommendations promoting equity in participation by Aboriginal women in all processes related to species at risk, balanced communication with regards to ATK and specifically Aboriginal women's perspectives, and equality in results for all genders – the three pillars of NWAC's CRGBA tool, the CRGAP. The Species at Risk Act reflects a federal government commitment to prevent wildlife species from becoming extinct and to secure channels for their recovery. A set of policies were developed to implement the Act; these were examined using the CRGAP and applied under the five policy areas as established by the Act, 1) assessment, 2) protection, 3) recovery planning, 4) implementation, and 5) monitoring and evaluation.

The policy paper on ***Impacts of Climate Change on Aboriginal Women*** provides an analysis of climate change from an Aboriginal woman's perspective acknowledging that they are most vulnerable to the changing global climate. Information in the paper was obtained from various literature sources but provides merely an overview of the impacts. It is by no means an exhaustive treatment of the subject of climate change. The impacts of climate change and the challenges raised in this paper require further detailed analysis; the paper is intended to provide background reading and inform further discussion and debate. A list of recommendations complements the paper, concluding that “climate change is a critical challenge facing Aboriginal women in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and its impacts will be distinct from those facing most non-Aboriginal people in Canada. Aboriginal women need to have a primary role in decision-making to address the problems of climate change.”

The policy paper on ***Aboriginal Women's Roles within Processes Related to Biodiversity and Access and Benefit Sharing*** examines the impacts of the loss of genetic resources and the lack of equitable sharing of benefits derived from those resources from Aboriginal women's perspective. Each of the issues – Effect on Aboriginal women, Response to Change, Challenges, and Recommendations raised in the paper require further detailed analysis. It concludes with some recommendations for moving forward.

The ***Finding Your Voice: Environmental Toolkit for Aboriginal Women*** provides a comprehensive how-to guide for those who are environmentally *conscious* and want to become environmentally *active*. The toolkit provides a myriad of ideas on how to engage a community in the Canadian environmental assessment process. Many of our communities are overwhelmed and often intimidated by government and industry that tend to move forward on resource extraction projects with little regard for communities impacted. This kit provides a “getting started” section that is intended to motivate and empower; a facilitator's guide that walks the user through the process of planning and hosting an environment workshop and information session; and a booklet on environment assessment basics. Included in the kit is a CD loaded with series of power point presentations (19 in all) that inform the user on a range of issues.

Two fact sheets were developed this year as supplements to the Violence Prevention Toolkit. One focused on ***Aboriginal gangs***, and the other on ***lateral violence***. Literature reviews commissioned by NWAC supported the content development; the Health Advisory Committee provided oversight on context, content, and “look and feel”. Rationale supporting the subject matter was provided by a strategic promotions plan developed in January 2010 in collaboration with the Sisters in Spirit and Labour Market Development departments.

Two newsletters – one summer and one winter – provided opportunity for NWAC staff to showcase their good work, and to promote awareness of issues of importance. The Health Advisory Committee (HAC) plays a role in the developing themes for the newsletter. The HAC meets biannually and each time reports on priority issues occurring at the regional level. The Health Department takes this information and formulates concepts for the newsletters. The newsletters are distributed nationally and made available on the NWAC website, in both official languages.

Erin Corston (formerly Wolski)  
Director of Health and Acting/Director of Environment

## **Department of International Affairs & Human Rights**

### **Overview**

The work in Human Rights and International Affairs has continued to focus on ensuring that Aboriginal women's distinct perspectives, rights and needs in Canada are considered and met in relation to key human rights concerns. The rights emphasized include the right to live free from violence and discrimination, the right to self-determination, rights related to lands, territories and resources, the right to health, the right to free, prior and informed consent as well as other economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights.

This has involved fostering positive partnerships with other national Aboriginal organizations, Aboriginal women's organizations, the Canadian Human Rights Commission, Unions and human rights groups in Canada, as well as with Indigenous organizations in the Americas and globally. We have participated in various national and international meetings where NWAC's lead role has ensured that women's voices were taken into account when addressing issues of concern to Aboriginal peoples, particularly Aboriginal women.

NWAC's work at a national level has included advancing human rights through such avenues as including meetings by the Provincial and Territorial Member Associations (PTMAs) regarding implementing Strategic Options Plan within the Self-Government Initiative that serves to promote Aboriginal women's leadership roles and in decision-making and with the Canadian Human Rights Commission and other partners to develop tools for First Nations regarding the implementation of the *Canadian Human Rights Act* on reserve.

### **International Human Rights Day – Talking Rights Symposium – Gatineau on December 10, 2010**

NWAC along with the Embassy of the Netherlands and the Canadian Museum of Civilization hosted a Symposium on International Human Rights Day entitled, *Talking Rights*. This event included esteemed panellists who discussed the rights of Indigenous women to share best practices in attempt to improve the rights of Indigenous women and their families.

### **Organization of American States (OAS) Sub-Regional Meeting of Indigenous Peoples from Canada, the United States and the Caribbean - Ottawa on December 13, 2010**

NWAC, AFN, and the OAS hosted a Sub-Regional Meeting with Indigenous Peoples from Canada, the United States and the Caribbean, where representatives developed recommendations in preparation for the upcoming meeting of Indigenous Leaders of the Summit of Americas in 2012.

### **6th Continental Meeting of Indigenous Women of the Americas in Morelos, Mexico from March 5-8, 2011**

NWAC participated in the 6th Continental Meeting of Indigenous Women of the Americas. It was an important event that sought to create a unique platform to address the problems affecting Indigenous women at the continental level. Our participation in this event was a strategic opportunity for NWAC to review the progress and achievements accomplished; to share best practices and strategies; and to meet with Indigenous women from 18 other countries. We were able to establish new partnerships, build on our existing networks, and discuss issues of common interest with like-minded women from across the globe.

**Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues -Tenth Session, New York City, New York from May 16-27, 2011**

The goals of NWAC's participation at the 10th Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII) were to ensure the integration of an Indigenous women's perspective into the discussions held during the sessions and at side events to ensure that they would be reflected in the final report of the meeting.

President Jeannette Corbiere Lavell attended the sessions along with the Executive Director, Claudette Dumont Smith and Teresa Edwards, Director of International Affairs and Human Rights, where they also participated in the Global Indigenous Women's Caucus, and the Global Indigenous Peoples Caucus and many side events.

NWAC was a part of the North American Indigenous Delegation that participated in discussions, reporting and made several interventions on NWAC priorities. We worked collaboratively with member States, representatives of non-governmental organizations and other United Nations entities throughout the session. A series of parallel events provided additional opportunities for information exchange and networking.

The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues is an advisory body to the Economic and Social Council, with a mandate to discuss indigenous issues related to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights.

**Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples –Geneva, Switzerland from July 11-15, 2011**

NWAC also participated as part of North American Indigenous Peoples Caucus, the sessions at the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The main agenda items were on the Study on Indigenous Peoples. NWAC made interventions on the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and was able to profile the key concerns of Indigenous women in Canada with both the Committee and the Special Rapporteur. NWAC

highlighted the importance of Indigenous women's rights and freedoms needing to be recognized in Canada and globally, referring to article 44 (gender equality).

**Reclaiming Our Nations Initiative: Nation-Building and Re-Building – Gathering Women's Wisdom - Community Awareness and Engagement Across Canada - April – November 2011**

NWAC is currently engaged in the Exploratory Process related to Nation-Building and Rebuilding: Gathering Women's Wisdom, as well as our provincial/territorial member associations).

NWAC has established positive reputations and have thorough structures in place to reach many women and their communities across Canada. NWAC is engaging and informing women, youth and Elders and their communities in discussions on nation-building, citizenship, and the relationships between our members, communities and Nations. NWAC is facilitating a national dialogue on First Nations citizenship and membership. The dialogue is funded by the department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Canada as part of the Exploratory Process to respond to the range of issues related to Indian Registration, membership and First Nation Citizenship.

The priorities for the current year include continuing to implement the self-government initiative; Nation-Building and Rebuilding sessions across the country: sharing information with communities about the implementation of the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and working to ensure the voices of Aboriginal women are heard in national and international discussions to improve the lives of women, their families, and communities.

At an international level, we will continue to build on collaborations and partnerships. NWAC will submit a shadow report to highlight our key concerns to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination for Canada's next review.

We will continue to engage at the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and with the OAS, where resources permit as they provide excellent opportunities for NWAC to advance the human rights of Aboriginal women.

**NWAC thanks the funders who have supported and continue to support this important work:**

Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, Department of Canadian Heritage, Public Service Alliance of Canada, Canadian Union of Public Employees National Office, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, Canadian Human Rights Commission, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Canadian Museum of Civilization.



Teresa Edwards,  
Director Human International Affairs and Human Rights

## **Labour Market Development**

### **Overview**

The Labour Market Development (LMD) department team provides a dedicated focus to the areas of employment, training and labour market related initiatives and policies relating to Aboriginal women in Canada. This national platform is an opportunity to showcase expertise on recruitment and retention employment strategies that specifically address the needs and realities of Aboriginal women.

Over the year, the LMD team has worked collaboratively to ensure effective delivery and support of current departmental projects, as well as engage in the active pursuit of new federal initiatives. A primary focus of the LMD department has centered on the national project transition involving the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement to the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy.

### **Projects**

#### **Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement (AHRDA) – April to September 2010**

The Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement (AHRDA) was the HRSDC federal initiative providing skills development, training and employment programs for Aboriginal people. NWAC, one of only two national AHRDA holders in Canada, is the only agreement holder dedicated to meeting the unique needs of Aboriginal women to increase their meaningful participation in the Canadian labour market. This last year NWAC received a six month extension agreement to continue the project and begin transition of the AHRDA initiative into the successor initiative, the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS). NWAC administered the AHRDA project through service delivery sub-agreements with Provincial Territorial Member Associations (PTMAs).

#### **Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) – October 2010 to March 2011**

The Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) began October 1, 2010 as a five year initiative to continue the work established under AHRDA.

The transitional period from AHRDA to ASETS, continues with a great deal of work to ensure the proper transition of all new HRSDC eligibility and minimal level of service requirements. As such, one of the key areas of the NWAC Strategic Business Plan focuses on increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of this national agreement at all levels for an overall improved service delivery of this project. There are three focused pillars under ASETS:

- Providing support for demand-driven skills development;
- Fostering partnerships with private sector and the provinces and territories; and

- Placing emphasis on accountability and results.

Several immediate improvements were made relating to reporting and client requirements, for example removing the requirement for the client to provide a referral letter. Other improvements included hosting two AHRDA/ASETS Coordinators Training Sessions to outline the ASETS service delivery and reporting requirements, and questions relating to the transition period of the project.

HRSDC made a number of recommendations for NWAC consideration including a review of NWAC's ASETS project service delivery model. As a result, NWAC hosted an engagement session in November 2010 with participation of the Board of Directors, PTMA Executive Directors and Sub-agreement ASETS Coordinators to discuss the future and options for NWAC's ASETS project. It was recommended that a service delivery model options paper be developed. The options paper has been included in NWAC's work plan for the coming year.

NWAC conducted AHRDA/ASETS project site monitors for the following sub-agreements: Mother of Red Nations Council of Manitoba Inc.; Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Council; Ontario Native Women's Association; Quebec Native Women's Association; Aboriginal Women's Association of PEI; Native Women's Association of NWT; and the Alberta Aboriginal Women's Association.

Throughout the year, NWAC has actively taken part in four working groups, established by HRSDC consisting of ASETS agreement holders from across Canada, to assist in the development of policies and reporting procedures. The working groups will continue to serve in reviewing the effectiveness and efficiency of the policies and reporting of all ASETS projects.

**Aboriginal Skills and Training Strategic Investment Fund (ASTSIF) – April 2010 to March 2011**

This national NWAC project entitled 'Building the Spirit' was a fifteen month initiative funded through the Human Resources and Skill Development Canada's (HRSDC) Aboriginal Skill and Training Strategic Investment Fund (ASTSIF). The primary focus was to provide sponsorship opportunities to Aboriginal women and youth in the areas of Aboriginal financial and program management as well as Literacy and Essential Skills (LES).

NWAC developed key partnerships through this initiative, partnering with the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of Canada (AFOA), The Banff Centre for Leadership Development, Northwest Community College, Parkland College and Okanagan College. Outreach strategies included a direct connection to NWAC capacity by providing sponsorship opportunities specific to the NWAC Board of Directors, PTMAs and PTMA staff.

This short-term project was a huge success. Overall, NWAC provided sponsorships to over 300 Aboriginal women and youth. 251 students accessed Financial and Program Management courses and 92 students accessed Literacy and Essential Skills programming.

*"I am happy to inform you that I wrote and passed the qualifying exam on March 30th which now allows me to write the provincial exam on April 11th. Upon successful completion of the provincial exam I will be a licensed life insurance agent. I will keep you informed of my progress. I am extremely grateful for your support and I thank you very much."* - Student excerpt

### **Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) – February to March 2011**

As a follow up to the previous Policy Collaboration Agreement (PCA) that unexpectedly ended March 2010, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) introduced the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA). NWAC created a work plan with four main objectives:

- Developing strategic partnerships with the private sector and provinces and territories;
- Sharing of best practices and labour market information tools among ASETS service delivery organizations and partners;
- Collection and sharing of data and evidence of results achieved by federal Aboriginal labour market programming to improve accountability and program effectiveness; and
- Engagement on a regional allocation funding model, Government of Canada priorities, and emerging issues.

The SPA was anticipated to commence in October 2010 however, HRSDC did not put this project in place until February 2011. Despite the start date, NWAC successfully carried out several high impact activities within the project in collaboration with other NWAC Labour Market Development events. In particular, this project extended and provided sponsorship to Aboriginal women to take part in the "Values and Ethics in the Aboriginal Workplace" workshops conducted by the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of Canada (AFOA).

Two workshops took place between February and March, with one workshop geared specifically towards Aboriginal youth. Each Two-day workshop focused on enhancing professional development. There were 23 young Aboriginal women that attended the youth workshop and 20 adult Aboriginal women in attendance at the next session. SPA financially supported all NWAC stakeholders to attend the workshop.

### **Helen Bassett Commemorative Student Award 2010**

Through the Helen Bassett Commemorative Student Award, NWAC has provided four awards annually in the amount of one-thousand dollars to young Aboriginal women throughout Canada

since 2003. This award is made possible by Helen Bassett who generously donated part of her estate to the Native Women's Association of Canada for the purpose of supporting young Aboriginal women in their pursuit of Post Secondary education.

Approximately fifty-seven completed applications were reviewed thoroughly and four applications, representing the four directions, were chosen for the Helen Bassett Commemorative Student Award. NWAC was pleased to present the award to the following outstanding young Aboriginal women of Inuit, Métis and First Nations descent:

**NORTH:**

Mary Leia Sowdluapik Cunningham

**SOUTH:**

Janell Melenchuk

**EAST:**

Kayla Miles

**WEST:**

Christina Grey

**Upcoming Priorities**

The Labour Market Development department activities will continue to focus on the transitional requirements of the ASETS project to meet the HRSDC eligibility requirements. This will include the development of a New Service Delivery Model – Options Paper based on the input of key NWAC stakeholders. The resulting NWAC ASETS Service Delivery Model will collectively address new HRSDC requirements and strategic priorities (Demand driven skills development; Partnerships; and Accountability for Improved Results) while upholding the NWAC goal of achieving equitable opportunities for Aboriginal women in the area of employment and labour market participation.

Another priority area is to work closely with HRSDC to establish a solid foundation for the policy area of work through a multi-year funding agreement with the Strategic Partnership Agreement. This national project focuses on initiatives for Aboriginal youth; gender based economic development opportunities and engagement strategies relating to labour market participation for Aboriginal women and youth in Canada.

Carey Calder

Director, Labour Market Development



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