



Native Women's  
Association of Canada

## Looking Forward

### *NWAC'S Faceless Dolls Project*

*A collection of faceless felt dolls will be used to create a traveling art exhibit in memory of the more than 600 missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada.*



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## Overview

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) was incorporated in 1974 and is one of the five officially recognized National Aboriginal Organizations (NAOs) whose purpose is to represent and speak, at the national level, on behalf of Aboriginal women in Canada.

The NWAC is led by an elected national president whose term is three years. The president is the official spokesperson for NWAC and has the authority to act on behalf of the Board of Directors. The NWAC is governed by a Board of Directors that includes the President of NWAC, the President or designate of each of the Provincial/Territorial Member Associations (PTMAs) as well as four Elders and four youth to represent the four directions.

The head office of NWAC is located in Akwesasne with a satellite office established in Ottawa, Ontario. There are 25 full-time persons on staff that is comprised of an Executive Director and five Senior Directors. Files being addressed by NWAC include: education, employment and labour, environment, health, human rights and international affairs and violence with a special focus on missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls.

## Provincial/Territorial Member Associations

**Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, President**

Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC)

**Michèle Audette**

Québec Native Women's Association (QNWA)

**Marilyn Napier**

Native Women's Association of the NWT

**Judy Hughes**

Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation (SAWCC)

**Dorothy George**

Newfoundland Native Women's Association

**Judy Clark**

Aboriginal Women's Association of P.E.I.

**Ruth Kidder**

Alberta Aboriginal Women's Society

**Dr. Dawn Harvard**

Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA)

**Chantal Genier**

Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council

### 4 REGIONAL ELDER REPRESENTATIVES

**Agnes Potter (East)**

**Elize Hartley (South)**

**Noreen McAteer (West)**

**Winnie Greenland (North)**

**4 REGIONAL YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES**

**Miranda Mitchell (East)**

**Regina Mandamin (South)**

New Brunswick Aboriginal Women's Council Inc.

Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA)

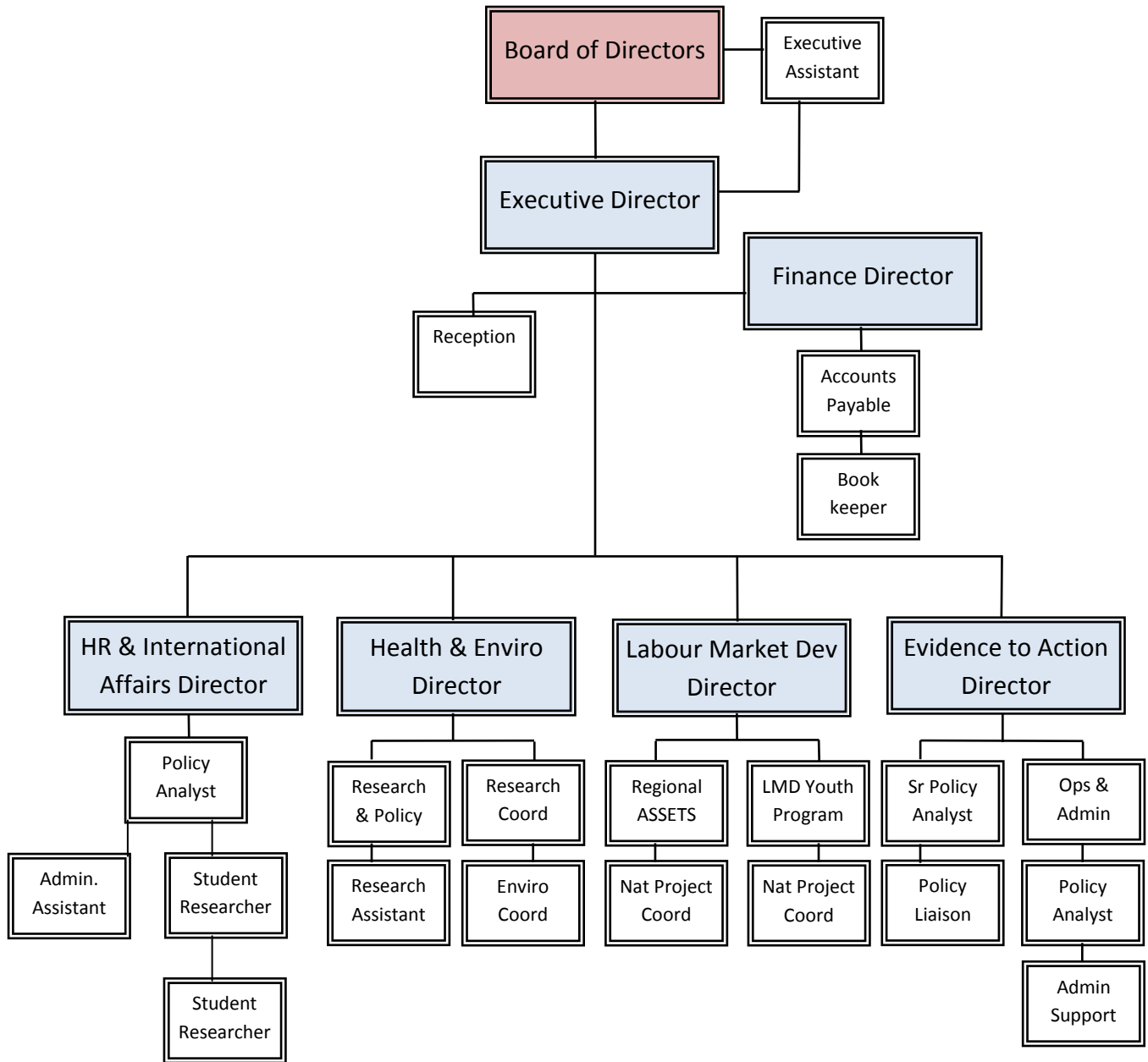
**Kari-Dawn Wuttunee (West)**

**Amanda Mudry (North)**

Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corp.

Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council

# Organizational Chart



## Mission

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:

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

We see Aboriginal communities where our children grow up with a strong identification of and pride in who they are and constantly seek to broaden their knowledge of the things that affect them and their relationship with the environment - 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 the broader society.

In order to accomplish this we see strong Aboriginal families where the responsibility of education begins in the home and families nurture their 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 which 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 and enhancing the exercise of our Aboriginal and treaty rights. This is a community which assumes responsibility in selecting leaders who will be role models for our youth and the 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.

## Messages

### *President*



## **Restoring Equality – Harmony & Well-Being**

Greetings and welcome to our 38<sup>th</sup> Annual General Assembly (AGA). It is my honour to welcome all delegates, Elders, Dignitaries, Presidents, youth, guests and observers to this gathering in the land of the Cree Nations in the great prairie province, Saskatchewan. It has been awhile since we have had the opportunity to hold an AGA outside of Ottawa. My sincere thanks and appreciation goes out to our Provincial/Territorial Member Association (PTMA), the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle, for hosting this years'

AGA.

As many of you realize, the current political climate has not been the most favourable for our people, whether we are First Nations, Métis or Inuit, on-reserve, off-reserve, in cities or in rural areas. However, all we have to do is take the time to look back over the past year and realize and recognize that in fact, we have accomplished many of our goals. We, in NWAC, have made important strides not only in Canada but at the international level as well, such as at the United Nation's Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the International Expert Group Meeting on Combating Violence against Indigenous Women and Girls in January 2012, at forums in Geneva on discrimination, at Human Rights symposiums in Washington, D.C. and, most recently in Alaska at an Indigenous women's gathering on health. We have brought awareness of the many issues affecting Aboriginal women through the media especially in relation to stopping violence against our women. The result of all this has been to bring the attention of the world on the issue of our many missing and murdered Aboriginal Women and girls in Canada.

You will read in the Annual Report of the many activities being spearheaded by the Directors at the NWAC national office all aimed at improving the health and well-being of Aboriginal women in Canada. I must share with you that I am most impressed with the great work that has been done. All we have to do is read the many press releases, media interviews, water walks, vigils, reports and research papers and realize that NWAC has accomplished a great deal in the past year. Comments have been made to me directly as the President and comments have been made to our office of the good work that NWAC is doing. This recognition is coming from individuals as well as from other Aboriginal Organizations including various Ministries and Departments within government. Considering that we receive the least funding in comparison to the four other National Aboriginal Organizations, it is indeed worthwhile to note and be proud of our accomplishments.

Due to our limited funding NWAC continues to seek out other funding sources to achieve our goal of financial independence. Thus, I am pleased to share with you, that, in fact, we have taken the first step in this direction. With the support and direction from the Board of Directors, we are in the process of

establishing our own independent Indigenous Women's Fund of Canada, which will be the charitable arm of NWAC. It is expected that this new charitable entity will be established in the fall.

I would like to give you an overview of the major activities we have been working on during the past year. I would also like to share with you, future major events that NWAC will be involved with in the forthcoming year.

**National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls:** We are persistent in calling for a National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls. In conjunction with FAFIA, the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action, we requested that CEDAW (United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women) conduct an inquiry because violence against Aboriginal women and girls is a national tragedy that demands immediate and concerted action. The CEDAW Committee can play a vital role not only in securing justice for the women and girls but also in preventing future violations by identifying the action that Canadian governments must take to address the root causes. As well, we presented before CERD, (the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination) on this same issue.

In March 2012, with FAFIA again, we appeared before the **Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, in Washington, D.C.** to provide a briefing on the disappearances and murders of Aboriginal women and girls in B.C. Canada. The three Commissioners were unanimous in their decision to also travel to Canada to investigate in the fall of 2012.

#### **AFN Annual General Assembly, July 17 - 19, 2012, Toronto, ON**

Emergency resolution: Following the apprehension of the serial killer Sean Lamb who murdered three First Nations women in Winnipeg, the AFN Chiefs -In-Assembly voted unanimously to:

- support NWAC in our call for a national inquiry on missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls across Canada,
- support our call to CEDAW to follow up and investigate Canada,
- recognize urgent need for the RCMP to establish a National Integrated RCMP and Police Task Force on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls,
- make a personal and public declaration to take full responsibility to be violence free and commit to taking all actions available to them to uphold and ensure the rights of Indigenous women and girls,
- Designate Oct. 4th as an annual National Day of Remembrance and join in the Sister's in Spirit Candlelight Vigils and commemorations in support of the families of missing and murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. (To date, NWAC has registered 90 Vigils across Canada).
- Call for a National Day of Action on Oct. 18, 2012 on missing and murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

**Council of the Federation, July 18/19, 2012, Halifax, Nova Scotia.** The majority of Premiers from across Canada, with the exception of one, supported our call for a National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls. The B.C. Premier stalled and indicated that they were waiting for the Oppal Commission report even as I indicated that we and 22 other groups had pulled out of the

Commission. On a positive note, Premier Salinger of Manitoba announced that Manitoba and NWAC would co-host NAWS 111 in Winnipeg on Nov. 1 & 2, 2012. The focus of NAWS III is to be on Families.

**Initiatives to promote Unity, Strength, & Co-operation:**

Realizing that there were undercurrents from governmental bodies to create divisions within our representative organizations, we, as the leadership agreed to work together on issues that impact our communities. So, the following partnerships have been signed:

- September 2011: Statement of Partnership signed with the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (CAAN)
- December 2011: Statement of Partnerships signed with AFN
- July, 2012: Statement of Partnership signed with the NAFC

**Promotion of our rights as members within our communities and Nations:**

I have participated, presented and lectured at many forums, conferences and gatherings on our traditional roles as women within our diverse cultures, responsibilities, and decision making roles that we have been given through our clans, teachings and historical practices. This is a vital role that we must continue to promote as we seek to improve the daily lives of our women and families within our First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities.

- **Promotion of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples** as they apply in our discussions with Governmental bodies and businesses.
- **Promotion of Treaty Rights and Métis Rights** as they apply to our women at the grassroots levels.

**Impact of governmental decisions on NWAC:**

You have been informed through our press releases of the 100 % cutback in funding from the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB) of Health Canada. We were devastated by this announcement and did our best to try to get funding reinstated; however, all NAOs suffered severe funding losses by this department.

The National Aboriginal Health Organization has ceased to function as of June, 2012, even though NWAC and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) did our utmost to re-structure, re-organize and maintain this important resource for health within our communities.

**Closing:**

I wish to convey to all of you as members of NWAC and members within your Provincial and Territorial organizations, that it has been an honour as well as a challenge, a good one, to fill the role of President for the last three years. I did my utmost in all areas, to raise the public profile of NWAC, at all public venues, and most especially to be available, supportive and a resource to NWAC's membership. I have strived to maintain and improve NWAC's profile as a hard-working, dedicated and committed national organization of Aboriginal (Indigenous) women.

We are diverse, coming from many First Nations and Métis communities, cultural traditions, languages, ceremonies and spiritual teachings, spread across Canada, in rural, urban and isolated centres, and we are here, as motivators, as leaders, as role models to do whatever we can to make positive changes in the lives of our daughters, granddaughters and for the generations to come.

I believe that is why you are here because you firmly believe that in our role as Aboriginal women, as Aboriginal leaders within our communities and as a collective, that by supporting each other, in unity and strength, we will make change for the better.

**Miigwetch,**

**Respectfully submitted**

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Joanne Landell".

## ***Executive Director***

Kwey, hello, bonjour!

The year 2012 has been another very busy and productive year for the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC). Although NWAC was presented with many challenges this year in terms of major funding cuts, the organization continues to make progress on issues that continue to be very problematic and worrisome for us as Aboriginal women, especially on the issue of our sisters who are missing and/or murdered. In the past year, NWAC was able to bring much needed attention on this matter at the international level. NWAC, in concert with the Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA), as well as many other supporters, have worked diligently to apprise international agencies of the conditions in Canada that perpetuate the ongoing onslaught of Aboriginal women and girls.

In the past year, NWAC has made formal presentations in Washington, New York and Geneva to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples of the United Nations and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). It is our fervent hope that these international agencies will convince the Government of Canada that this is an urgent matter that must be addressed once and for all.

Further, NWAC is demanding that a National Inquiry on missing and murdered Aboriginal women be initiated and NWAC has garnered the support of other National Aboriginal Organizations to support this demand. Manitoba, and other provinces, remains very supportive of the work NWAC is doing in this regard and Manitoba has very recently publicly announced that it will be hosting a third National Aboriginal Women's Summit (NAWS III) in November. NAWS III will focus on missing and murdered Aboriginal women and will include the participation of families at this major event.

A great deal of time and effort is spent on working with the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group, which is comprised of representatives from the Provinces, the Territories and the four other National Aboriginal Organizations. Throughout the year, countless tele-conferences are held to discuss the three priority areas that have been worked on for the past several years, namely: violence against Aboriginal women, education and economic development. Each year the NAO leaders meet first with the Aboriginal ministers of each province/territory with a second meeting, the Council of Federation meeting, held with the Premiers. The last COF meeting was held in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia. The goal of the AAWG is to get the provinces and territories to advance the issues brought forward by the NAOs at the provincial/territorial level. The Federal Government does not participate at these meetings in spite of being invited at both annual meetings.

Other files that have been moving forward for the purpose of improving the living conditions of Aboriginal women in Canada are on the environment, health, human rights, employment and labour, education, residential schools as well as to working in other areas of violence against women such as domestic violence and trafficking. This report will highlight the major activities that each unit within NWAC has worked on and will continue to work on next year. Some of the reports that were generated

from the work NWAC accomplished in 2012 are available either on-line and/or in hard copy. Please do not hesitate to speak to the directors about the work that their respective units are doing on these topics.

The past year can also be noted for the creation of partnerships. NWAC has signed a formal partnership agreement with the Assembly of First Nations, Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network, DreamCatcher Mentoring, and, most recently, with the National Association of Friendship Centres. Pauktuutit has also approached NWAC to begin discussions on developing a more formal partnership to address issues of mutual concern.

From an administrative perspective, NWAC is doing well. Better control measures are in place by way of policies and the five-year strategic plan, which guides our work. As well, we are governed by By-Law 12, which has been approved by Corporations Canada. However, the By-Laws will once again change as major rules and regulations will be put in place to govern corporations by Corporations Canada by the year 2014.

NWAC has applied for charitable status, which should be approved within the next 3-6 months. The charitable arm of NWAC will be known as the "Indigenous Women's Fund" and the first Interim Board of Directors of this new entity are as follows: Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, Chair; Marilyn Napier (North representative); Barb Morin (West representative); Natalie Gloade (East representative); Michele Audette (South representative); Regina Mandamin (youth representative); Sheila Linklater (NWAC finance director); and, Teresa Edwards (in-house legal counsel). We anticipate that once we receive this charitable designation, our dependency on government funding will decrease while our independency as an organization will increase.

I would like to end by acknowledging and thanking the Board of Directors for their confidence in me and to thank the staff who provide me with the encouragement, support, dynamism and their expressions of kindness on a daily basis which, in turn, gives me the strength and energy I need to carry out my challenging but rewarding duties.

Migwech, thank you, merci!

*Claudette Dumont-Smith*

## Current Files

### Labour Market Development

#### *Overview*

The Labour Market Development (LMD) department team provides a dedicated focus to the areas of employment, training, labour market programming and policies that is relative to Aboriginal women in Canada. This national focus enables the LMD 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 Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement that transitioned to the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy.

#### *Projects*

##### **Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS)**

The Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) began October 1, 2010 as a five year initiative ending in March 2015. During the first 18 months we have been in transition from AHRDA to ASETS and are developing a model that addresses the many changes under ASETS.

In September 2011 we began training for the KETO database from Contact IV Database; this training provided NWAC and HRSDC a way to capture results in a more efficient and user friendly manner. Due to the complexity of the database and because some sub-agreement holders were unable to attend the September 2011 training session, a second training session was held in March 2012. The two sessions were successful and enabled all sub-agreement holders to be in line to use the KETO database from April 1, 2012 forward. Accountability, in particular accounting challenges that plagued NWAC under AHRDA have been addressed with reporting from sub-agreements greatly improved, allowing NWAC to report in a clear and concise manner to HRSDC.

During the last AGA there were surveys conducted by Stonecircle Consulting Group to aid NWAC in developing an ASETS/AHRDA service delivery option paper. Stonecircle presented this paper in December 2011 to the Board of Directors. With the options Stonecircle provided it was decided by the Board of Directors to take items from each option to develop the Enhanced Community Capacity Building Model. Working with the project committee the final version was incorporated in the Annual Operation Plan that was approved by HRSDC on May 25, 2012.

Through the proposal process the LMD staff has been working closely with the PTMA's to provide clear steps of the service delivery they plan to do in their area. Sub-agreements will then be written based on the information received in the proposals provided by the PTMA's. The Enhanced Community Capacity Building Model allows NWAC to ensure ASETS coverage exists in areas where there is no PTMA. It also addresses some of the communications and accessibility issues that NWAC has experienced in the past.



As we move forward the LMD team at NWAC will be supporting PTMA's to ensure client information is getting posted and uploaded to the KETO database in a timely and consistent manner. We are also working on the development of partnerships with a variety of groups as part of the three pillars of ASETS. We are planning a working group session for winter 2013 to facilitate continued progress in developing partnerships at the sub-agreement level. At this session we will discuss best practices etc. for partnership development.

### **Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA)**

The Strategic Partnership Agreement commenced February 2011 and ran through to March 2012 (this was to be a two-year agreement commencing in April 2010 running through to March 2012) however, due to delays at HRSDC it was not able to start until February 2011. With such a late start it hindered NWAC and its affiliates to benefit as was intended in the original work plan. Despite a very late start NWAC was able to accomplish the work and achieve success on the modified timeline.

A new proposal has been submitted to HRSDC for the period from April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013. The work plan focuses on consultation regarding ASETS programming beyond 2015. We plan to host a session regarding this in the late fall of 2012.

Throughout this agreement NWAC will continue to facilitate and increase engagement and partnerships with the private sector, government and industry, stakeholders, and post-secondary/academic institutions.

For the 2012 AGA, the NWAC youth coordinator will host a youth session to discuss:

- challenges faced by youth in the Labour Market;
- development of the NWAC Youth Engagement Network as a means to share information and involve young Aboriginal women in Canada to become more familiar with information regarding current and future labour market issues; and
- upcoming youth events and opportunities etc.

Through SPA, NWAC continually collaborates with HRSDC on emerging policy and program issues and is able to participate in meetings and consultations organized by HRSDC.

### **Financial Literacy and Essential Skills Project**

This is a new initiative for NWAC through Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) and commenced in June 2012 to March 31, 2013. NWAC, in collaboration with the Edmonton Financial Literacy Society (EFLS), will create a Financial Literacy Train the Trainer program for young Aboriginal women (18-30 years) with a focus on entrepreneurship. The outcome for the participants is to become knowledgeable and informed in planning and making financial decisions about their future. In addition understanding the role that money plays in their lives particularly in terms of economic security and eventual prosperity will help them to realize their economic potential. NWAC staff plans to deliver four workshops -- one in each of the four directions to include between 10-20 participants/workshop between October 2012 and March 2013.

## **Helen Bassett Commemorative Student Award 2011**

In 2003, NWAC created 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. 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.

Fifty-four 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: Itoah Scott-Enns  
SOUTH: Amanda Carling  
EAST: Cinthia Jean  
WEST: Cara-Faye Merasty

## **Pending Proposals**

NWAC continues to submit proposals and look for additional funding through a variety of sources.

There was a call for submissions from HRSDC for a Strategic Partnership Fund (SPF) in the Energy and Mining Fields. NWAC submitted a proposal called "From the Ground Up" to commence in October 2012 and continue through to March 2015. "From the Ground Up" will be a new project in an expanding field with the potential to provide Aboriginal women with the skills for a career that will provide a solid income for their families. From their successful completion it will set them up as a role-model for other women in their community (reserve and/or urban) to embark on a similar career path in the mining and energy sectors. A key outcome coming from the project is that Aboriginal women will be engaged in full-time employment that will also provide the benefits of independence over dependence. This understanding can be passed down inter-generationally so that young women and girls will also see that independence is integral to the pursuit of happiness. Happiness is a driver of mental wellness with it communities are stronger and thrive.

## **Upcoming Priorities**

The Labour Market Development department activities will continue to focus on NWAC's ability to meet the HRSDC eligibility requirements. This will include the development of partnerships at a national level and encourage growth in this area at the provincial level under the Enhanced Community Capacity Building Model. NWAC 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.

***Submitted by: Elizabeth Williams, A/Director***

## Education

### *Previous Year*

As part of NWAC's strategic plan, crucial objectives have been set to achieve NWAC's vision. Of particular relevance here are the following:

- We will conduct our activities in a culturally-relevant and gender sensitive manner
- We will mobilize knowledge to address issues affecting Aboriginal women
- We will be a leader in policy analysis and development on issues affecting Aboriginal women

In line with NWAC's vision and strategic plan, NWAC has recently concluded a very successful project in education. The final product, a research report titled, "A Research Report on First Nations Educational Success" has been submitted to and accepted by AANDC. This capstone marks the successful culmination of extensive community interviews, data analysis, and resulting conclusions compiled into a comprehensive written report.

The goal of the report was to examine successful First Nation communities to identify keys to educational success. By interviewing multiple people at numerous intersections of education (parents, school administration, band council members, etc.), the research was able to produce comparative data that could highlight successful trends for First Nations communities. The research was collected following NWAC's protocols for a culturally relevant gender-based analysis. Permission was sought and received from the FN band councils. The researchers worked with the communities to set up interviews, and it was ultimately the communities that decide how each visit would take place.

The FN communities involved were Tsuu T'ina First Nation, Tk'emlúps First Nation, Westbank First Nation, and Huronne Wendat First Nation. The focus groups concentrated on the following categories: location and proximity to urban centres, governance structures and processes, local education system, teacher retention rates, funding, classroom environment, student supports, gender roles in leadership, parental and community involvement, and language and culture programming. After a thorough review of the data, the following trends were identified as running throughout the communities, with very few exceptions, highlighting the community's perceived emphasis on them as important for educational success:

- Partnerships
- Gender-Focused Initiatives
- Community Involvement
- Language and Culture
- Bridge-Building Within Schools

While the completion of this project is an important milestone in NWAC's progress, it is only one of many educational projects NWAC will pursue. NWAC remains committed to education as an important field of contest and potential for empowering Aboriginal women and girls.

## ***Upcoming Year***

Following up on the success of the “Research Report on First Nations Educational Success”, NWAC is pleased to inform the board that it is embarking upon another major education endeavour.

Following the submission of the previous report, AANDC approached NWAC to conduct a gender-based analysis to relevant parties in the Aboriginal community. Currently, AANDC is in a state of preparation. Education reform for First Nations has been declared as a priority by the federal government, and several reports have been submitted by Aboriginal organizations or organizations consulting Aboriginals on what relevant reform might be, and how the government should go about education reform in partnership with Aboriginal peoples.

While AANDC’s next steps remain undecided, they want to ensure that whatever the results of upcoming decisions and community engagements, they will be cognizant of the issues that relate particularly to First Nations women and girls in regards to education. NWAC will be helping to fill that knowledge gap with the engagement and participation of its board members.

Occurring within the AGA this August, board members will be invited to participate in a focus group that seeks to draw out relevant concerns and appropriate processes for shaping future education policy and legislation, as well as providing AANDC with a framework for continuing with their own engagement with communities. This is an opportunity to speak directly to AANDC on what must be heard and understood so that First Nations education changes in a way that protects and empowers First Nation women and girls. This critical dialogue will likely exceed the AGA time allotment, but NWAC is prepared to continue it through online web conference engagement.

This is an exciting opportunity to share and collaborate in a project that may directly influence First Nation education policy. No less than that, it is also an opportunity to unite some of those most knowledgeable experts in critical dialogue that may provide the foundation for many more valuable and much needed education endeavours.

NWAC is greatly looking forward to engaging in this discussion with the board, and we look forward to what we are confident will be powerful results.

***Submitted by: Andrew Bomberry, Research Support Staff***

## Evidence to Action II

### Project Goal

To reduce the levels of violence experienced by Aboriginal women and girls by increasing access to resources for women, families, communities, governments, educators and service providers.



The Evidence to Action II (ETA) project has successfully undertaken many activities organized around four key thematic areas: education, tools for communities, partnerships, and community responsiveness. These thematic areas support the ETA objectives 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. A brief summary of work undertaken is provided:

### ETAII Project Activities & Update

#### SIS Vigils

Every October 4<sup>th</sup>, thousands of people gather together to honour the memory and raise awareness of the many missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. These vigils act as a resounding movement aimed at social change and includes participants from all walks of life. For October 4, 2011, a total of 62 vigils were registered by NWAC, with an additional five added. There were also numerous unregistered vigils being held on, before or after October 4<sup>th</sup>, with some organizers hosting vigils on anniversary dates or on other dates recognized as days of remembrance/action. New for 2011, was the development of a virtual candlelight website wherein visitors could light a "virtual candle"; the website address is [www.october4th.ca](http://www.october4th.ca).

Also new for 2011, NWAC conducted a Vigil Follow-Up Survey with Vigil organizers to gather information on Vigils and to receive feedback for future planning. Completed surveys were received from 25 Vigil organizers (40%), summarized below.

- Ninety-six percent of those who hosted a Vigil in 2011 said that they planned to host another Vigil in 2012. Organizers reported good results: one said, *“We received a lot of positive feedback from those that attended. It was great to see so many youth take part in this event.”*
- The size of the Vigils was quite varied, ranging from 20 to 250 people. Over one-half reported that they had between 75 and 250 people in attendance.
- The most common locations for Vigils were civic or community centres or halls, or local Aboriginal Friendship Centres. Other Vigil locations included parks, schools and churches.
- Family members who have a missing or murdered loved one spoke at or shared their story at just over half (52%) of the Vigils. Local community leaders also spoke at the majority of Vigils.
- The media attended and/or covered 76% of the Vigils that completed the survey.
- The majority of organizers used posters to advertise their Vigil (84%), and almost one-half used a Facebook page to promote the event.
- Almost one-half of the Vigils started in the afternoon : 20% started during the morning hours and 28% started after 6pm in the evening.

For October 2012, we hope to surpass previous Vigil numbers and have mobilized early to better support organizers. A special one-time only banner was developed for 2012 and is available to all vigil organizers who register before July 31, 2012. NWAC can provide a SIS Vigil toolkit, as well as SIS Vigil kits containing buttons and flags for your vigil. Please contact the ETA department for further information and to register your October 4, 2012 SIS Vigil. We would also like to remind Vigil organizers to visit and promote the [www.october4th.ca](http://www.october4th.ca) website and light a candle in memory of the many Aboriginal women and girls who are not with us today.

### **Family Gathering**

The NWAC 6<sup>th</sup> annual Family Gathering was held on January 27-29, 2012. In preparation for the Family Gathering the ETA department conducted a review of past gatherings and developed an NWAC Family Gathering “basics and essentials” guide to better support planning and to ensure a successful event that better responds to the needs of family members in attendance. In total, 25 family members and family supports attended, representing all directions (North, South, East, and West). To enhance the experience and to enable family members to commemorate their loved one(s), graphic artist Colleen Stevenson was engaged to prepare on-site posters of the event as well as one specific poster for family members. In appreciation and to reciprocate, this year a special report to families was prepared in addition to an outcomes report.

On day one of the Family Gathering, an NWAC orientation was conducted, as well as review of the ETA project and its activities. Of particular importance on this day was a Sharing Circle which enabled

participants to share their thoughts, experiences and stories with support from the Elders, each other and the counsellors. Day two saw a review of key themes from the 2010 Family Gathering, discussions focused on needs assessment, and positive empowerment and mentorship. During the evening, participants attended the Community Resource Guide product launch, with five participants volunteering to be interviewed for the CRG video. On day three, a Victims Services needs assessment and Clinical Tool development session was scheduled, including an evaluation of the Family Gathering.

Overall, the evaluations were very positive. As one participant said, *“The gathering was extremely valuable as we were able to meet and support other families as well as share our experiences. This really helps because we are all at different stages and sometimes sharing helps us to move forward in our healing.”* The majority of the participants said they experienced a big improvement in their knowledge, outlook, values or ambitions because of the event. Over half of the participants said that attending this session had increased or bettered their personal network, because they had met new people that they think they will stay in touch with or contact in the future.

Planning for the 2012-13 Family Gathering is scheduled to begin in September 2012.

### **Life Stories**

Life Stories are a unique way to honour missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. This in-depth process is undertaken through interviewing individuals and families and is guided by the NWAC Community Based Research Plan, which acts as the “how to” document referred to for guidance and clarification. Chapter three entitled “Research Ethics and Principles” outlines the process of relationship building and working with families and details how “NWAC uses a participant-oriented and experiential approach in the research process” based on the key principles of caring, sharing, trust, and honesty. An analysis and review of existing process was conducted, including a scan of external life stories, along with suggestions made by family members and educators resulted in the decision to digitalize the next phase of NWAC’s publishing of life stories. The interview matrix, utilizing the life cycle model is in the process of being updated and organized to support the new digital format.

Currently, the ETA department is developing the methodology required to digitalize life stories to better utilize newly evolving technology which will better promote and generate awareness of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada.

### **Community Resource Guide (CRG)**

This new tool for communities is designed to answer the question: “What can I do to help the families of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls?”

The CRG was officially launched at the Family Gathering in January 2012. During the launch and at subsequent engagement sessions video footage was attained and resulted in the development of a CRG training video. The CRG was introduced during community engagement workshops and formed part of the NWAC Faceless Dolls Project presentations. The dissemination strategy included a wide array of educators (including elementary, secondary, and post-secondary teachers), community stakeholders and justice service providers.

## Community Engagement Workshops (CEW)

As part of our commitment to the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls, the ETA team conducted six Community Engagement Workshops (CEWs) during the 2011-12 fiscal year designed to engage Canadians on an issue that impacts us all. These CEWs were entitled, “Each Statistic Tells a Story,” and were organized around three main themes: NWAC’s Faceless Dolls Project, Teaching Political Activism, and NWAC’s Community Resource Guide. Each CEW was adapted to the specific audience or target group in attendance. For example, PPT slides were added to the original PPT to detail specific provincial/territorial/regional statistics based on the NWAC Fact Sheets. A separate Hand Out called Teaching Political Action was created for the February 25<sup>th</sup> CEW for teachers of Native Studies and Native Languages as an additional resource for teachers. In the case of the March 19<sup>th</sup> CEW, the Professor asked for a detailed account of challenges related to activism work.

The following is a short description of the three main themes that were developed/emerged as the CEW were conducted.

- **NWAC’s Faceless Doll Project** – Traveling to communities to underscore NWAC’s commitment to the issue of Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls (MMAWG), present the issue of MMAWG, and engage in a hands-on art project where participants are invited to hear the Faceless Doll story and create their very own doll for inclusion in this commemorative art project. The end project will be a collection of faceless felt dolls that will be used to create a traveling art exhibit in memory of the more than 600 missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada.
- **Teaching Political Activism** – “Introducing the Issue of Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls into the Classroom” – Presenting the CRG as whole with specific attention being paid to Chapter three, “Teachers and Educator,” which features the three fact sheets and the toolkits, “Introducing the Issue” and “Suggested Resources.”
- **NWAC’s Community Resource Guide (CRG)** – An introduction to NWAC, showcasing the work of ETA and ETA’s main activities (such as the Sisters In Spirit Vigils, the Faceless Doll Project and the CRG itself), with an introduction to the issue of Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls (MMAWG), often with a regional/provincial focus (using NWAC’s Regional/Provincial Fact Sheets).

## Clinical Tool

In response to research undertaken during the Sisters In Spirit (SIS) project, it was identified that research needed to result in actionable tools that can be used by front line practitioners to better respond to experiences of violence faced by Aboriginal women and girls. NWAC is currently in the development phase of this exciting new resource.

Following a call for proposals, Note Bene Consulting Group has been contracted to develop and test pilot the clinical tool. Led by Marilyn Van Bidder, a clinical tool development session was held at the NWAC Family Gathering and followed two of NWAC’s Community Engagement Sessions (Edmonton, AB and Winnipeg, MB). Development of the clinical tool is well-underway, and is expected to be complete



in the fall of 2012. The launch of the Clinical Tool is expected to align with the next NWAC Family Gathering.

### **National and International Conferences and Meetings/Partnership Development & Collaboration**

The NWAC President, Executive Director, Evidence to Action director and NWAC staff continue to maintain an active role and presence in relation to the high levels of violence experienced by Aboriginal women and girls, and in particular, 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).

Partnerships and collaborations also occurred 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, including the Council of the Federation, 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 others. Existing partnerships were maintained and strengthened and include close and mutually supportive relationships such as KAIROS, Amnesty International, NWAC PTMAs, and National Aboriginal Organizations. Internationally, this included various tables in which Indigenous issues related to violence against Indigenous women were heard, such as the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Combating Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls meeting held in the Spring of 2012.

*“I feel less alone. I feel more empowered to do something about ending violence against Aboriginal women.”*

Quote from Family member, January 2012 NWAC Family Gathering.

**Submitted by: Irene Goodwin, Director**

## Health and Environment Department Update

### ***Department Goal***

The Department at NWAC was developed in recognition of the unique health needs of Aboriginal women in Canada, and in response to the gross disparities in health determinants as they relate to Aboriginal women's health status. The Department receives advice and guidance from an advisory committee that is made up of Aboriginal women from each region of the country, from coast to coast to coast. The goal of the Health and Environment Department is to raise awareness of the disproportionate burden of ill health carried by Aboriginal women in Canada and to contribute towards the development of sustainable solutions for positive change.



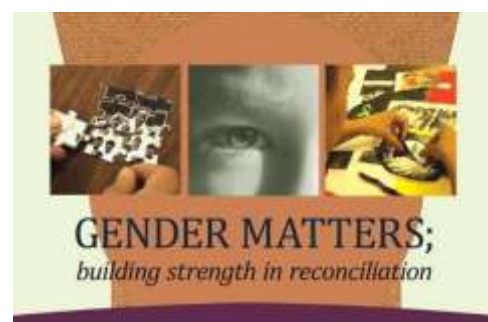
***This picture was taken at the last Health Advisory Committee meeting in Vancouver, BC in March 2012.***

*From left to right: Josiane Loiselle-Boudreau (QC), Erin Corston (Health Director), Dan Peters (NAYSPS Coordinator), Billie Allan (Health Research), Melissa Blind (Health Research), Amanda Mudry (HAC Chair), Lydia North (DSIA member), Myrle Ballard (NACOSAR), Lana Ray (ON), Ashlee Pigford (Health Policy), Judy Sturm (BC), Krista Reid (YK), Stephanie Francis (NB), Noreen McAteer (AB), Cheryl Copage (NS), Sandra Millar (SK), Erica Hurley (NL), Jean Brown (Elder), Lena Gargan (NWT), Melanie Wabano (Health Junior Researcher), Fiona Cook (Health Research and Policy), Carol Moar (DSIA Elder), Jade Harper (DSIA coordinator)*

### ***Health and Environment Activities & Update***

#### **Residential Schools**

Last year we reported on a project called "*Arresting the Legacy: From Prisons to Residential Schools*" and a 30-page booklet that was produced as part of our efforts to raise awareness about the crisis of Aboriginal women and girls over-incarceration within Canada's criminal justice system. This year our continued work on the issue brought about the development of our report called "*Gender Matters: Building Strength in Reconciliation*", a report documenting the impacts of inter-generational residential school linked trauma on



criminalized Aboriginal women and girls that was launched May 30th in partnership with Justice for Girls, with the participation of Reverend Andrew Johnston, of Kairos Ecumenical Social Justice Initiatives. This latest report calls for the recognition of the principles of self-determination and the restoration of Aboriginal decision making in justice related matters, noting that gender-based Aboriginal diversion programs can contribute in an important way to an inclusive vision of healing, justice, increased public safety and reconciliation over the long term in Canada. Both of these reports are available on the NWAC website.

### **Elder and Senior Abuse**

Last year we reported on a project called the “Grandmother Spirit project” noting specifically the Public Service Announcements and Resource Guides we produced. The videos can be found on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IdbNn8ioIhI> and [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0e\\_l2LoMXr8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0e_l2LoMXr8) and the Resource Guides are in your conference kits. This project was funded by HRSDC and came to an end last year.

### **Health Careers Promotion**

Last year we reported that we developed a guide book promoting the career of Personal Support Worker, or PSW, called “On My Way”. This tiny step-by-step booklet is also available in your conference kits. We encourage you to pick up additional copies at the HEALTH BOOTH and share them with Aboriginal women you may know who are interested in a career in health and are looking at a somewhere to start.



*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.*

This year we continued our efforts to promote Health Careers and pursued a partnership with DreamCatcher Mentoring (DCM can be found at <http://www.dreamcatchermentoring.ca/>) The goal was to establish a sustainable e-mentorship program and contribute to retention and completion rates among Aboriginal students in post-secondary school, in health programs across Canada. DreamCatcher Mentoring is a virtual organization that matches high school students in the Yukon and Nunavut with Canadian mentors in a variety of careers. They welcomed an opportunity to work with NWAC and to specifically target Aboriginal women. In March 2012 NWAC and DCM formalized their partnership and signed a Memorandum of Understanding. Even though Aboriginal Health Career promotion funding has been cut NWAC plans to continue working with DCM in 2012 and beyond.

## **NWAC IS LOOKING FOR MENTORS AND MENTEES TO PARTICIPATE IN OUR E-MENTORSHIP PROJECT!**

For more information  
Contact Erin Corston, Health Director at [ecorston@nwac.ca](mailto:ecorston@nwac.ca)

### **Culturally Relevant Gender Based Analysis**

The Health and Environment Department continues to lead the way in GBA. The entire Department participated in a week-long course offered by the University of Ottawa and Mosaic International to evaluate the workshop and determine whether NWAC could offer a similar workshop focusing specifically on the cultural aspects of GBA. The entire team agreed that by expanding on our current work, that it was something we not only **COULD** do, but **SHOULD** do. With that, we developed a detailed Facilitator's Guide and set of CRGBA curricula that we hope to use in the future and offer CRGBA training to community members, researchers, and policy and decision makers working with and for the Aboriginal community. Funding for this work has ended but we remain committed to making NWAC a hub for CRGBA training in Canada. Stay tuned...

### **FASD**

Last year we reported on a preliminary study we were involved with that investigated the linkages between FASD, gangs, sexual exploitation and abuse. We unfortunately were not successful in leveraging funding to continue this work in the 2011-12 fiscal year and do not anticipate that funding from Health Canada will materialize in the near future. This research was critically important and links with all of the work we do here at NWAC. Addictions and mental health are issues that many Aboriginal women deal with directly and indirectly on a daily basis, and can be linked to outcomes of residential schools and the child welfare system.

### **Diabetes**

Last year we completed the *Diabetes Self-Management Toolkit* and this year we "took it on the road". This year we printed up several copies of the toolkits – they are available at the HEALTH BOOTH!



We worked with a group of at-risk youth in Manitoba in collaboration with the First Nations and Inuit Health Region. The youth shared their personal experiences with diabetes; each of them had a history of diabetes in their families. They heard a series of presentations on the myths, signs and symptoms, risk factors, and complications of diabetes. They learned about the importance of consuming traditional foods and active living, and then developed personal diabetes self-management plans. The youth committed to live and eat healthy and do what they could to avoid developing the disease later in life.

*This poster was used to advertise the workshop. Several young people responded to the poster, many of them from rural and remote communities in Manitoba including Birch River, Norway House, Mosakahiken Cree Nation, and others (see below).*

***This picture is of the diabetes workshop participants and was taken in March 2012.***

**Elders**

*Barb Nepinak, Clarence Nepinak, Larry Monkman*

**Youth**

*Flora Packo, Winnipeg, Tricia Bland, York Factory First Nation, York Landing, Natalie Kematch, Indian Birch First Nation, Birch River, Olivia Hart, Norway House Cree Nation, Norway House, Delia Muswagon, Norway House Cree Nation, Norway House, Tracey Hornbrook, Kinonjeoshtegon First Nation, Hodgson, Barb Thomas, Kinonjeoshtegon First Nation, Hodgson, Tara Beardy, Garden Hill First Nation, Island Lake, Marlena Denechezhe, Northlands Band, Lac Brochet, Irene Osborne, Cross Lake First Nation, Cross Lake, Dustin Franklin, Poplar River, Negginan, Joseph Berens, Poplar River, Negginan, Vanessa Mason, St. Theresa Point First Nation, St. Theresa Point, Issac Wood, St. Theresa Point First Nation, St. Theresa Point, Hillary Vinet, Mosakahiken Cree Nation, Moose Lake, Emma Lee Campbell, Mosakahiken Cree Nation, Moose Lake, Rosa Mason, Sapotaweyak Cree Nation, Pelican Rapids, Marcia Quill, Sapotaweyak Cree Nation, Pelican Rapids*



**Mental Health**

Multi-generational interviews were conducted this past year using an approach to research that was suggested at a meeting of experts hosted by NWAC in December 2011. The project was called “*Three Generations Speak: A United Voice on Aboriginal Youth Suicide*” and produced ground breaking information intended to enhance the role of Aboriginal women as the keepers of knowledge, and as visionaries in the preservation and prosperity of family, community and nation. Including multiple generations in the process served to revitalize community roles in:

- Promoting positive values and ethics for children who are future youth;
- Providing women who are of working age and in their most productive years an opportunity to lead; and,
- Sustaining Elders’ contributions, knowledge, and skills.

Funding for mental health promotion and suicide prevention has been cut by Health Canada and will not be renewed.

**Daughter Spirit in Action (DSIA) pilot project**

The overall goal of the DSIA pilot project was to engage youth in the development and delivery of local programs (i.e., workshops) on suicide prevention. Last year we reported on a resource tool we developed to assist youth in delivering their workshops; this year, the guidebook was put into action and was used to deliver over 100 workshops in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario. Through this project several young Aboriginal female leaders found their voice and became spokespersons on suicide prevention in their communities. A couple of the DSIA members are now some of the most powerful speakers sharing their stories of suicide with their peers, leadership, and anyone who will listen. DSIA grew significantly in this last year and touched an estimated 1000 youth nationally. The project will be remembered because it instilled desire among youth to “do something” about what is now considered an epidemic in many First Nation communities.

**Grandmother Moon Teaching**-- The Grandmother Moon Teaching is a traditional teaching for women on the significance of the full moon and how moons are connected to our menstrual cycles. The youth learned the significance of each moon from their Elder and then interpreted their understanding by painting one rock for each of the 13 moons.

**Making Traditional Rattles**—Rattles have been used for many years in our culture and are historically made of animal hide, intestines and dried beans, sometimes pebbles. The teaching is on ceremonial meditation and chanting. Meditation is an important element of mental health because it is a relaxation technique for our mind and body so that we can focus on what needs our attention.



## HIV/AIDS

Information gathered from the implementation of our project on HIV/AIDS will be used to develop a gender-specific culturally appropriate toolkit for high-risk Aboriginal women that can be adapted to fit individual needs, and will include use of traditional and cultural knowledge in coping with day to day life challenges. NWAC has been holding workshops across the country engaging at-risk women and youth, the outcomes of which will provide better understanding of the linkages between issues such as family violence, surviving family violence, displacement of youth through apprehension through child welfare, alcohol and substance abuse, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Effects, sexual exploitation, loss of culture and language and high risk behaviour contributing to HIV/AIDS infection. This project is funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada and ends in the fall of 2012.



NWAC signed a memorandum of understanding with the Canadian Aboriginal Aids Network (CAAN) in December 2011 to kick off Aboriginal Aids Awareness week, and subsequently submitted a joint application to the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR) to conduct community based research on HIV and AIDS. The submission was successful and NWAC looks forward to collaboratively implementing this project over the next five years.

## Health Research - Neurological Conditions

This project, called “Understanding from within” focuses on developing community-driven and culturally relevant models for understanding and responding to neurological conditions among Aboriginal peoples. We are mid-way into a three year project funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada intended to improve understanding of how Aboriginal peoples conceptualize neurological conditions, the impact on their families and communities, and the needed resources and supports to provide culturally safe and appropriate care. The findings are intended to inform policy, programming and service responses that reflect and respect the cultural values and knowledge(s) of Aboriginal peoples, and the social conditions and challenges faced by their communities in Canada. The data collection phase of this project wraps up this fall. The project ends in March 2013.



*The logo used for the Understanding from Within project is designed by Mike McKenna, an Anishinabe artist from Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. The name of the artwork used for the logo is called Seven Grandmothers Healing Circle. The logo draws on the teachings of the seven grandmothers, the medicine wheel and is protected by the seven grandfather's teachings, which is shown as the sweet grass braids.*

## National Aboriginal Council on Species at Risk (NACOSAR)

The role of NACOSAR is to advise the federal Minister of Environment on the administration of SARA and provide advice and recommendations to the Canadian Endangered Species Conservation Council. NWAC's representative on NACOSAR is Carrie Terbasket, member of the Lower Similkameen Indian Band of the Okanagan Nation. Carrie co-chairs the NACOSAR along with Chief Eric Morris, Yukon Regional Chief, Assembly of First Nations.

This year the Council of the NACOSAR met with the Environment Minister Kent to discuss the myriad of issues including the fact that the Minister had not met with the NACOSAR since 2005, and that the NACOSAR terms of reference had yet to be finalized regardless of ongoing efforts since NACOSAR's inception seven years ago. Additionally, NWAC developed a series of policy papers early in 2011 and is still waiting for a response from the department as to how they will address our concerns. In our policy papers an assessment of the Species at Risk Act from a culturally relevant gender based perspective was conducted. In April 2012 the National Environment Coordinator attended a three-day workshop in Usdub, Guna Yala, Panama. The workshop responded to concerns around declining biodiversity, global environmental change, and an unsustainable human impact on the biosphere, as well as the urgency of the situation as perceived across cultures, geographical scales, and knowledge systems.

**Submitted by: Erin Corston, Director Health/Environment**

## Human Rights and International Affairs (HRIA)



### 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. Unfortunately, most Canadians are not aware of the many issues and conditions that Aboriginal Peoples, particularly women, continue to experience in Canada and abroad still today. NWAC has worked to raise the profile of many issues such as: violence against women, the lack of justice response, high rates of women in prison, the underfunding to on-reserve education, multiple forms of discrimination, poverty, and ongoing sexual exploitation and trafficking of women and girls, the lack of access to clean water, along with the many other violations to our basic human rights.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is the universal human rights instrument that is celebrated globally and its implementation would result in significant improvements in the lives of Indigenous Peoples. NWAC's IAHR directorate has worked to emphasize the implementation of all human rights, but have highlighted Indigenous women's rights to live free from violence and discrimination, rights to self-determination, rights related to lands, territories and resources, rights to health and well-being, 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 and equality-seeking organizations, including our Provincial/Territorial Member Associations (PTMA) and their membership, other Aboriginal women's organizations, the Canadian Human Rights Commission, Unions and human rights groups in Canada. We have continued to work strategically with Indigenous organizations in the Americas and globally while participating in meetings at the United Nations and in national in international committees in order to bring about positive social change, both in Canada and across the globe.

We have participated in various national and international committees where NWAC's lead role has ensured that women's voices were taken into account when addressing issues of concern to Aboriginal Peoples, both in Canada, and worldwide.

### Projects and Responses to Domestic Legislative Measures

#### Aboriginal Peoples and Volunteering – October 2011 - March 2012

The Native Women's Association of Canada worked for the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada to expand knowledge on various aspects of volunteering among Aboriginal Peoples (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis) of Canada to build on existing knowledge by identifying broadly the understanding of, motivations for, and patterns of volunteering among Aboriginal Peoples as volunteers (with a particular focus on Aboriginal women). The project also aimed to identify innovative practices and methods of engaging Aboriginal Peoples as volunteers.



Our project found that once cultural aspects are taken into account, traditional protocols are recognized and relationships are built between the Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal communities, volunteering can serve as a mechanism to build mutual respect and social cohesion between Canada's Aboriginal Peoples and non-Aboriginal populations.

### **The Exploratory Process on Indian Registration, Band Membership and Citizenship**

This year particular focus had been placed on the right to self-determination through the Nation-Building and Re-Building initiative on Citizenship, Membership and Identity. NWAC worked with its PTMAS and with individual Aboriginal women in provinces and territories where our PTMAS needed our support or where an Aboriginal women's organization didn't exist to carry out the "Exploratory Process" in order to make the process our own. We gathered the women's wisdom and views on Nation-building and rebuilding. We discussed issues beyond Indian Registration, Band membership and citizenship among women, Elders, youth individuals at the national, regional and local levels, both on and off reserves.

During the 2009 engagement on the Government's plan to implement the *McIvor* decision, First Nations and other Aboriginal groups identified a number of issues on Indian registration, Band membership and First Nations citizenship that went beyond the scope of the Government's interpretation of the decision and the legislative amendments passed under Bill C-3, the *Gender Equity in Indian Registration Act*. At that time, First Nations and other Aboriginal groups also called for federal action to have a joint process that would substantively examine and address these broader issues.

In response, the federal government announced an Exploratory Process on Indian registration, Band membership and Aboriginal citizenship in March 2010, concurrently with the tabling of Bill C-3. With the passage of Bill in December 2010, the Exploratory Process was launched from April to November 2011.

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

Given that the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) applies a gender perspective to human rights issues to ensure that decision-makers of all kinds in all governments are aware of equality gaps and issues that affect Aboriginal women and girls, NWAC was asked by the Government of Canada to meet with our membership across Canada to discuss these important topics.

We shared information with Aboriginal women, youth and Elders and their communities about governance, citizenship and Nationhood and discussed topics such as implementing our Treaties, retaining and reclaiming our traditions, governance structures and laws, continuing to practice our culture, using and regaining our languages, honouring our Elders and their Teachings, mentoring our youth, who are the future of our Peoples, and the links to Nation-Building and Re-building today.



## **Governance**

Other areas of work included continuing to implement the NWAC's five-year Strategic Plan by building on our internal governance and capacity. Strategic planning is an important tool for NWAC. It sets out the steps NWAC will follow to achieve its mission and vision. NWAC's 2011 – 2016 Strategic Plan is based upon the following mission and vision statements taken from NWAC documents. NWAC's IAHR hosted a session with all the Executive Directors from our PTMAs to review the Strategic Plan to ensure that we are all moving in the same direction – 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.

NWAC's IAHR also hosted a two-day Directors' Workshop to identify ways to review our Vision Statement and General Objectives to identify how we are working to implement them. Our vision continues to pursue Aboriginal communities where women have an opportunity to develop their talents; are encouraged to live healthy lifestyles by maintaining balance; are encouraged to learn our history and traditional ways; accept and exercise their responsibilities to contribute to a strong community; and, are accepted in a society free of racism and discrimination.

In addition, we examined how each Directorate is meeting the following general objectives: The Native Women's Association of Canada strives to be the national voice for Aboriginal women in Canada; address issues of concern to Aboriginal women; assist and promote common goals; promote equal opportunities for Aboriginal women; serve as a resource; cultivate and teach; assist Aboriginal women's organizations; advance issues and concerns of Aboriginal women; promote Aboriginal women in leadership; and link with other Aboriginal organizations with common goals. As a national organization for Aboriginal women, we seek to enhance health, social, economic, cultural, and political outcomes for Aboriginal women in Canada.

## **Standing Committee and Human Rights Committee Presentations 2011-2012**

Throughout the year the Director of IAHR accompanied the President, the Executive Director, and other Board Members to do presentations before the Finance Committee, the Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, the Committee on Human Rights, and to the Continuing Committee on Human Rights. The purpose of the presentations was to try to influence Government legislation such as *Bill C-3 Equity in Indian Registration Act*, *Bill S-2: Family Homes on Reserves and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act*, *Speech from the Throne*, *Budget 2012*, etc., programs and policies to ensure that they meet the needs of, or are aimed at improving the lives Aboriginal women and their families.

## **National and International Conferences and Meetings/Partnership Development & Collaboration:**

### **Statement of Partnership with the Assembly of First Nations – December 6, 2011**

On December 6, 2011, both the Native Women's Association of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations signed a Statement of Partnership, declaring their mutual respect for each party's mandates, policies, responsibilities and areas of responsibility. The AFN and NWAC agreed to work collaboratively together in areas of common interests and objectives with regard to resolving cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women, including the pursuit of institutional changes within police agencies and the criminal justice system to advance the safety and security of all Aboriginal women. They also agreed to work together to advance First Nations women's access to rights and wellbeing, thereby also improving the lives of First Nations families and communities.



### **Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination – February 2012 – Geneva, Switzerland**

At an international level, we have continued to build on collaborations and partnerships. NWAC submitted a Shadow Report to highlight our key concerns to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination for Canada's review and attended the United Nations in Geneva in February 2012. While at the UN, NWAC met with other non-Government organizations, Aboriginal, women's and human rights organization to strategize, develop Joint Statements to the Committee and issue Press Releases in order to raise awareness of the ongoing racial and sexual discrimination that Indigenous women continue to face today. NWAC made interventions before the Committee and met with the Committee members at side events and individually to discuss issues impacting on Indigenous women in Canada.



### ***Women, the Charter, and CEDAW in the 21st Century: Taking Stock and Moving Forward –***

#### **Queen's University, Faculty of Law - March 2-3, 2012 – Kingston, Ontario, Canada**

NWAC IAHR Director partnered with Cynthia Westaway of Border, Ladner, Gervais law firm to do a presentation on Aboriginal Women in Business – *Forging Ahead – Aboriginal Women as Powerful Entrepreneurs*.

Women's equality rights have now been recognized in international treaties like the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*, and the *Beijing Platform for Action* is supposed to be implemented, and governments and civil society are expected to behave in non-discriminatory ways. However, discrimination and inequality continues.

Simultaneously with these reforms, economic inequality is rising, wealth is becoming more concentrated in the hands of fewer individuals, and fundamental cultural, religious, race, sex, and ability-based divides still exist despite the practices of globalization.

This conference brought law students, students from other areas of study, members of community groups and non-governmental organizations, practicing and academic lawyers, policy analysts, equality experts, and interdisciplinary experts together to assess the state of gender equality, and to identify existing priorities and strategies for advancing well-being on all relevant dimensions.

With leading gender experts from across Canada and from Sweden, Ghana, and Taiwan, this conference probed the roles played by race, immigration status, Aboriginal heritage, education, family composition, and other factors in shaping the status of women, and identified policies and practices best calculated to remove existing obstacles to equality. Key questions ranged from the role of economic crises in shifting perceptions and opportunities to how emerging environmental, security, justice, and regulatory issues affect women and men.

#### **Aboriginal Optimistic Futures Summit - March 6, 2012 – Gatineau, Quebec, Canada**

On March 6th, 2012 the Next Generation Leaders professional development network of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) hosted its first Optimistic Futures Summit at the Canadian Museum of Civilization. The Summit, which enjoyed the support of the AANDC Deputy Minister, was a unique forum where 40 young and new employees, representing all AANDC regions, developed a greater understanding of Canada's current Aboriginal landscape, learned about the operations of different sectors within AANDC, and shared their ideas on how the Department can better deliver its mandate. Apart from group discussions and interactive activities, the Summit included presentations from the Native Women's Association Human Rights and International Affairs Director, as well as presenters with expertise in proactive innovation in government. Furthermore, it provided future AANDC employees with the opportunity to network with their colleagues and to establish professional ties that are expected to enable more collaborative approaches in the workplace.

#### **Our Way Conference, College of Law, University of Saskatchewan - March 22-24, 2012 – Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada**

The Ariel F. Sallows Chair in Human Rights, Mary Eberts and the College of Law, University of Saskatchewan with Oskayak High School, Saskatoon, hosted a conference on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Law-Making. NWAC's International Affairs and Human Rights Director participated in and presented at the conference that not only discussed the implementation of the Declaration but also honoured the sacred lives and contributions made by both Patricia Monture and her daughter Kate Monture-Okanee.

#### **Inter-American Commission on Human Rights – March 28, 2012 – Washington, District of Columbia, United States of America**

The NWAC President, Executive Director, and Evidence to Action Director continue to work collaboratively with IAHR to maintain an active role and presence in relation to the high levels of violence experienced by Aboriginal women and girls, and in particular, by addressing the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls as part of implementing Indigenous women's right to safety and well-being. Audiences include communities, students, academia, police, service providers, policy and decision makers, key stakeholders, partners, government and government committees, and international bodies, such as with the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

On March 28, 2012 NWAC and the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action appeared before Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). They called upon the Government of Canada to initiate a national inquiry into the disappearances and murders of Aboriginal women and girls in Canada and to ensure the full participation of Aboriginal women and Aboriginal organizations within national and provincial inquiries.



### **Women and Self-Government, University of California, Berkeley – April 26-28, 2012 – San Francisco, California, United States of America**

NWAC Director of International Affairs and Human Rights participated in, and presented at the conference entitled, “Aboriginal Self-Governance in North America: Dreams and Realities since 1970.” The conference was organized by UC Berkeley and hosted by the Canadian Studies Program, UC Berkeley with the support of the *Bluma Appel* Fund in Canadian Studies. The Canadian Studies Program at UC Berkeley invited academic and Aboriginal leaders, as well as members of the public, to attend a conference on Aboriginal Self-Governance in North America. We explored several important issues such as the current situation of Aboriginal self-governance for each of Canada’s four Aboriginal Communities: Status Indians, Non-Status Indians, the Métis, and the Inuit; what range of self-governance models were developed over the past four decades and which of these models have proven successful and under what conditions and circumstances; and what other possible models of self-governance are available that might be useful for the expanding urban and suburban Aboriginal populations, particularly in the Western Canadian provinces. The group also discussed what could be learned from the U. S. A. and Canadian experiences and perspectives. NWAC also highlighted the common issues raised by women by the “Reclaiming Our Nations: Gathering Women’s Wisdom” initiative.

### **United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Eleventh Session - May 6-11, 2012 – New York, United States of America**

NWAC IAHR also attended the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in May where we submitted a paper on the *Doctrine of Discovery*, and networked with other Indigenous Women’s groups to build alliances, share best practices, and to exchange ideas. NWAC signed on to Joint Statements and the President, Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, presented the Statement on Violence Against Indigenous Women on behalf of the NWAC, the Assembly of First Nations, Amnesty International, the Grand Council of the Crees, and several other organizations. NWAC also participated in side events hosted by the Indigenous youth, the Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas (North Region), and the North American Indigenous Peoples Caucus.

The goals of NWAC’s participation at the Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 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.

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 collaboration.

## **Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – July 11-15, 2012 - Geneva, Switzerland**

NWAC along with other Aboriginal and equality-seeking organizations participated with other representatives in the sessions to discuss the issues being raised including the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to share best practices in attempt to improve the lives of Indigenous Peoples, highlighting the importance of Indigenous women's rights and freedoms needing to be recognized in Canada and globally.

NWAC also participated in the sessions, side events, and met with the North American Indigenous Peoples' Caucus to strategize on recommendations for the Committee for future areas of study. NWAC signed on to Joint Statements that were being presented on the specific themes and also submitted its own report to the Committee to highlight issues of concern for Indigenous women in Canada.



**From Left to Right: Teresa Edwards, Ellen Gabriel, Ed John, Jennifer Preston, Paul Joffe, and Kenneth Deer**

## **Statement of Partnership with the National Association of Friendship Centres – July 31-August 1, 2012 – Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada**

On July 31- August 1, 2012, both the Native Women's Association of Canada and the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) signed a Statement of Partnership while at NAFC's Annual General Meeting, declaring their mutual respect for each party's mandates, policies, responsibilities and areas of responsibility. The both agreed to work collaboratively together in areas of common interests.

### **Upcoming Priorities**

IAHR is currently working on a Women and Leadership project and preparing NWAC's response for the Universal Periodic Review, and preparing for the UN Committee on the Status of Women in 2013. We are currently awaiting approval of funding from private funders for other projects.

**NWAC IAHR thanks the funders and partners who have supported and continue to support our important work:** Our PTMAs, Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, Department of Human Resources Development Canada, Canadian Labour Congress, The First Nations Child & Family Caring Society, Assembly of First Nations, National Association of Friendship Centres, Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action, Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, Grand Council of the Crees and Paul Joffe, Amnesty International, KAIROS Canada, Concertation des Luttes Contre L'Exploitation Sexuelle, Vancouver Rape Relief Shelter, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Canadian Women's Foundation, Canadian Human Rights Commission, and many other organizations.

**Submitted by: Teresa Edwards, Director of International Affairs and Human Rights, In-House Legal Counsel**

## Youth

The NWAC respects the voice of youth and recognizes the critical role youth have in our communities. NWAC has been able to continue work with youth under the Labour Market Development Department without designated youth funding.

### **NWAC AGA 2011**

At the 2011 NWAC AGA there was a youth 'meet and greet' engagement session and the Youth Board Member Election. At the event, youth representatives from each of the PTMAs in attendance were given the opportunity to learn a bit about each other while sharing their ideas for future NWAC youth related projects.

#### Meeting with NAO Youth Representatives

The Labour Market Development Youth Coordinator meets with youth representatives from the other National Aboriginal Organizations on a regular basis to discuss upcoming events, ways for youth to get involved and opportunities for partnership and collaboration. These meetings, while informal, ensure the lines of communication remain open between NAO Youth Programs.

#### Indigenous Young Women's Gathering

The NWAC Youth Department was an active partner in the creation and implementation of the Indigenous Young Women's Gathering in Saskatoon, SK in November 2011. The LMD Youth Coordinator and two Youth Board Members sat on the advisory committee for this event and assisted in the planning and delivery process. Both board members sat on the advisory committee since the project began and were instrumental in its creation. At the event, the Labour Market Development Youth Coordinator and the Labour Market Development Student both gave presentations to a selection of the participants. From Victims to Agents: The Pursuit of Economic Empowerment and Equity in Education: The need for Aboriginal Focused Schooling was the workshops created and delivered by NWAC staff.

#### Gathering Our Voices Youth Conference

NWAC set up a tradeshow booth at the Annual Gathering Our Voices Youth Conference in Nanaimo, BC in March 2012. This was an opportunity to teach youth about our organization and gauge their interest. More than 60 youth filled out a form asking to be more informed about NWAC and all that we do.

#### Inclusion Works 2012

LMD staff, including the Youth Coordinator, attended Inclusion Works 2012 in Edmonton, AB in May 2012. This event was created by the Aboriginal Human Resource Council and brings together young Aboriginal graduates and various companies from across Canada in hopes the graduates will find meaningful employment in their chosen field.

#### NAFC Annual Youth Forum

The National Association of Friendship Centres invited NWAC to their Annual Youth Forum in Whitehorse, YT in July 2012. The LMD Youth Coordinator was able to attend the event and interact with

youth from across Canada. We have a good working relationship with the NAFC Youth Program and attending this event helped to strengthen this relationship.

***Submitted by: Brittany Jones, LMD Youth Program Coordinator***

## **Corporate Sponsors**

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