



NATIVE WOMEN'S
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

L'ASSOCIATION DES FEMMES
AUTOCHTONES DU CANADA

Annual Report/2013

Annual 39th General Assembly



↑ Education = ↑ Economic Opportunity = Empowerment

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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.



PTMA Contact Information

Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council

Tel: (867) 667-6162

Fax: (867) 668-7539

E-mail: yawc@northwestel.net

Mailing Address:

202 - 307 Jarvis Street

Whitehorse, YT Y1A 2H3

Courier Address:

SAME

President: Marian Horne

Native Women's Association of NWT

Tel: (867) 873-5509

Fax: (867) 873-3152

Toll free: 1-866-459-1114

E-mail: reception@nativewomens.com / www.nativewomensnwt.com

Mailing Address:

Box 2321

Yellowknife, NT X1A 2P7

Courier Address:

President: **Paulina Roche**

Executive Director:

Dreamweaver Basil

BC Native Women's Association

Tel: (250) 314-1565

Cell: (250) 318-9999

Fax: (250) 828-9972

Mailing Address:

#215 – 345 Chief Alex Thomas Way

Kamloops, BC V2H 1H1

President: **Barb Morin**

Courier Address:

same

Alberta Aboriginal Women's Society

Tel: (780) 624-3416

Cell: (780) 625-1520

Toll-free 1-877-622-3416

Fax: (780) 624-3409

E-mail: aaws@telusplanet.net

Mailing Address:
Box 5168
Peace River AB
T8S 1R8

Courier Address:
10011B - 102 Ave.
Peace River AB
T8S 1R8

President: **Ruth Kidder**

Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation

Tel: (306) 783-1228
Fax: (306) 783-1080
E-mail: sawcc@hotmail.com
Website: <http://www.sawcc.sk.ca/>

Mailing Address:
Box 1174
Yorkton SK S3N 2X3
President: **Judy Hughes**

Courier Address:
89 Broadway St E.
Yorkton SK S3N 0L1
Office Manager: Farrahlyn Cote

Ontario Native Women's Association

Tel: (807) 623-3442
Toll-free: 1-800-667-0816
Fax: (807) 623-1104
E-mail: onwa@onwa-tbay.ca
Website: <http://www.onwa-tbay.ca>

Mailing Address:
380 Ray Blvd
Thunder Bay, Ontario
P7B 4E9
President: **Dr. Dawn Harvard**

Courier Address:
SAME

Executive Director:
Betty Kennedy

Femmes Autochtones du Quebec Quebec Native Women's Association Inc.

Tel: (450) 632-0088
Toll-free: 1-800-363-0322
Fax: (450) 632-9280
E-mail: info@faq-qnw.org Website: <http://www.faq-qnw.org/>

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 1989
Kahnawake, QC J0L 1B0

Courier Address:
Business Complex River Road
Main Floor, Suite 118
Kahnawake, QC J0L 1B0

President: **Viviane Michel**

Executive Director: Carole Bussière

Newfoundland Native Women's Association

Tel: (709) 789-3430

Fax: (709) 789-2207

E-mail: nf.nativewomen@nf.aibn.com

Mailing Address:

P.O Box 22

Benoits Cove, NL A0L 1A0

President: **Dorothy George**

Courier Address:

34 Shoreline Road

Halfway Point, NL A0L 1A0

Executive Director shared position

Cathy Halbot & Dorothy George

Nova Scotia Native Women's Association

Tel: (902) 893-7402

Fax: (902) 897-7162

E-mail: cheryl.copage@gmail.com

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 805

Truro, NS B2N 5E8

President: **Cheryl Maloney**

Courier Address: 52 Martin Crescent

Millbrook Reserve

Truro, NS B2N

Interim Executive Director:

Cheryl Copage

Aboriginal Women's Association of PEI

Tel: (902) 831-3059

Fax: (902) 831-3027

E-mail: awapei@lennoxisland.com

Mailing Address:

PO Box 145

Lennox Island, PE C0B 1P0

President: **Judy Clark**

Courier Address:

Dennis Motors

833 Main Street

Ellerslie, PE C0B 1J0

A/Executive Director: **Carol Peters**

Manitoba Moon Voices Inc.

Tel: (204) 219-9318

E-mail: moonvoices@gmail.com

Mailing Address:

Innovation Centre – United Way of

Winnipeg

580 Main Street

Winnipeg, MB R3B 1C7

Co-Chair:

Vanessa Tait

4 REGIONAL ELDER REPRESENTATIVES

<p>Agnes Potter (East) Box 37 or 10 Beach Road, Bear River First Nation, NS B0S 1B0 T: 902-467-3597</p>	<p>Elize Hartley (South) 162 Herkimer Street Hamilton ON L8P 2H4 T: 905.526.9036</p>
<p>Noreen McAteer (West) Box 229 Fort Vermilion AB T0H 1N0 T: 780.927.4391 F: 780.927.4390</p>	<p>Elder (North) Vacant</p>

4 REGIONAL YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES

<p>Samantha Lewis (East) Aboriginal Women's Association of PEI P.O. Box 151 Lennox Island, PEI C0B 1P0 T (home) 902.831.3286 / 902.888.3707</p>	<p>Syndyn Baxter (South) Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) 1014 Donald Street, East Thunder Bay, ON P7E 5V6 T (home) 807.329.9323</p>
<p>Kari-Dawn Wuttunee (West) Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corp. B102 – 415 Hunter Road Saskatoon, SK S7T 0J8 C: 360.280.4109</p>	<p>Vacant (North) Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council</p>

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

Michèle Audette

Kuei dear members!

Welcome to our annual assembly, which, this year, is based on the theme of education, and empowerment!

My first year of service with the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) has been filled with memorable experiences, historic moments and enriching encounters. At our last general assembly, I suggested we adopt a collaborative approach, boost our organization's visibility and nurture relations with Aboriginal governments, the provinces and territories and the federal government. I also suggested that we get to know the issues at stake in the different regions making up this vast territory and defend the interests of Aboriginal women at every turn.

Since the assembly, several files have been addressed in a range of forums at international, national, regional and community levels. I can say, without any hesitation, that I enjoy the experiences offered to our organization. I take advantage of every opportunity to draw attention to the issues we face and especially to our desire to work with governments, organizations, unions, the private sector, educational institutions, civil society, Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal organizations and, of course, Aboriginal women.

I can also say that an incredible force for greater justice has emerged across Canada. We have been active in the Idle No More movement and lent our support to Chief Spence throughout her hunger strike. We reaped the benefits of these efforts in the 13-point declaration, which includes the issue of missing and murdered women. We also delivered numerous presentations to federal government standing committees, helped to obtain legal rulings on residential schools and child welfare, and filed an affidavit in the Bedford case with the Supreme Court of Canada. This is not to mention our lobbying efforts with special rapporteurs.

I am extremely proud to be part of this mobilization process and, especially, to see that our organization is playing a central role in it on a daily basis.

Several meetings, conference calls, activities and representations have taken place since December.

Priority files, undertaken in accordance with mandates assigned during NWAC meetings, have been presented and discussed in various places with:

- Aboriginal women and men, on an individual basis;
- students;
- community groups;
- foundations;
- Aboriginal communities;
- Aboriginal organizations;

- Sisters in Spirit (SIS) families;
- Aboriginal women entrepreneurs;
- male and female chiefs;
- the federal government, ministers, MPs and senior civil servants;
- provincial and territorial authorities;
- Provincial and Territorial Member Associations (PTMAs);
- the main labour unions;
- civil servants,
- the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs;
- the private sector;
- the Supreme Court of Canada;
- the media.

I truly appreciate the work accomplished by our team. Under Claudette Dumont-Smith's leadership, they made sure that I was always well prepared to meet with the abovementioned groups. Moreover, they exceeded my expectations with respect to the quality of their briefing notes, the structure of the speeches they prepared and the content of their press releases. As for our administrative staff, they are courteous and take great care to keep our organization within budget.

I must also draw attention to the participation of our administrators. Your advice and encouragement contribute immensely to the work we do every day.

I have met with half of our member organizations and each time I was amazed by the amount of work being done on the ground. Our regions have so many dynamic women. Indeed, WOMEN, women of all ages, constitute an incredible force within in our communities that was born in the midst of a painful legacy.

COLLABORATIONS

Assembly of First Nations (AFN)

NWAC and AFN joined forces to co-host the National Forum on Community Safety and Ending Violence. I am very satisfied with the dialogue established among national Aboriginal organizations (NAOs). We support one another, consult one another and remain abreast of what happens on this Hill.

VISIBILITY

Our organization has witnessed an increase in representations as well as the addition of a new region, Québec. Moreover, it is receiving requests from various quarters, including the private sector, educational institutions, unions, community groups and the Aboriginal community. Everyone offers their support when the message is shared. Our cause is noble, but it always meets with a certain resistance. Steps must be taken to overcome people's ignorance, and our organization must play a leading role in this process.

Canada's Francophone media are helping with these awareness-raising efforts. In addition, the media in general have already contacted us in regard to the following files: Chief Spence, Idle No More, the Parliamentary Committee on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the Human Rights Watch (HRW) report on relations between the RCMP and Aboriginal women in British Columbia, and the

need for a national public inquiry. We have had to defend our family database, following an attempt by the government to discredit our data. We managed to defend our reputation, as shown by the fact that the RCMP now says it wants to work more closely with us.

Various countries have also contacted NWAC for information on Aboriginal women's issues and priorities. U.S. newspapers, the BBC and Radio-France are some of the organizations that have submitted requests.

ISSUES/PRIORITIES

National network of Aboriginal businesswomen and entrepreneurs

We have held our first working session and it was attended by women from various regions and backgrounds.

We are constantly lobbying on behalf of Aboriginal businesswomen and entrepreneurs. My dream is that our organization will have the expertise and funding needed to implement strategies to combat the poverty still faced by far too many of us.

Family gathering

We held a family gathering in Wendake. I spent three days there with my children. We listened, cried, laughed and forged new ties. We were welcomed with a great deal of love. Such gatherings, which offer participants a chance to engage in activities, connect and network with others, enjoy small courtesies and find an outlet for their concerns, are a very vibrant part of our work.

Human Rights Watch report

Various women's rights organizations and the Association des femmes autochtones du Québec (AFAQ) held a joint press conference on this report. Together, we described the highlights of the HRW study, which revealed the troubled relationship that existed between the RCMP and the Aboriginal women of British Columbia. The stories the report told were atrocious and full of hate for Aboriginal women.

Once again, we attracted the attention and sympathy of Canadians. However, the government tried to discredit our organization, particularly our research and database. The print media, radio and television wanted to know if the data we had was the same as that of the RCMP. This was the same tactic that Chief Spence had to endure when the government leaked information on her community's financial statements.

We invited the members of the RCMP to sit down with us so that we could work together in a spirit of collaboration rather than confrontation. Relations between our two organizations have since improved.

57th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, New York

An action week was held during the 57th international meeting on the status of women. We met with members of the Canadian Parliament to discuss the Parliamentary Committee on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. We expressed our concerns, and they were well received by the MPs present.

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Washington

Accompanied by representatives of the Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA), NWAC once again made gains on Aboriginal women's issues with the members of the commission. We have since received confirmation that the Special Rapporteur will be in Canada this fall and that our organization will collaborate with her.

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

The most recent session of the permanent forum included a busy week of meetings, events and representations for NWAC. Indeed, we met with Ms. Ameline, Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), various HRW representatives, the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women of the Organization of American States (OAS) and members of the forum. Our young delegates gave presentations during the session and left a very good impression on their audience. We were very proud of them.

Parliamentary Committee on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

Negotiations have taken place with MPs, Minister Ambrose and Minister Valcourt to ensure that we actively participate in the committee's work. We are following this file very closely and are lobbying to ensure that families and experts are invited to play a role.

I would like to thank all the people, volunteers, NWAC board members, members of the NWAC team and NWAC's partners for having guided me through this first year.

Much remains to be done and I will continue to work with all my heart to implement a national action plan for the socioeconomic development of Aboriginal women—a plan where civil society, the philanthropic sector, the business community, Aboriginal, provincial and territorial governments, and the federal government join forces with NWAC to improve the living conditions of Aboriginal women and their families.

Have a good annual assembly!

Michèle Audette

A year in Review:

Executive Director

Kwey, hello, bonjour!

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to our 39th Annual General Assembly here in Ottawa on Algonquin Territory, the land of my ancestors! I will provide you with an update of the activities NWAC has been addressing since my last report to you in 2012. You will note that many of this past year's activities are similar to those noted in the 2012 annual report because much of our activities are based on our ability to access project funding from the Federal Government, who are NWAC's primary source of funding at this time.

September 2012 was very busy at the NWAC Ottawa office as the newly elected NWAC president, Michèle Audette, had to be oriented to all that is related to the operations of NWAC such as its' current staff, files, procedures etc. In addition, a round of introductions and meetings had to be organized to introduce Michèle to other NAO leaders, Members of Parliament from the Conservative, Liberal and NDP parties, high level Government officials, the RCMP and other supporting NGO's such as representatives from Amnesty International other similar groups. At these meetings, important linkages and relationships were established and/or further solidified. Though time-consuming, these meetings were important to set the stage, so to speak, for Michèle to acquaint herself with the Ottawa political scene and to establish a working relationship with the major players that NWAC does business with.

Over the past year NWAC has continued to carry out work under the following departments: Health and Environment, Violence Prevention and Safety, Labour Market Development and Human Rights and International Affairs. In the ensuing pages of this report are detailed descriptions of the various files that are addressed and worked on by each Director and their staff. The Directors are steadily trying to access additional funding to maintain and/or either increase the work within each of their sections. The amount of work done in each area fluctuates year to year and is dependent on the availability of funds either from Government or other sources.

Education and Economic Development are two fairly new areas that NWAC is addressing and I am happy to say that we have been allocated funds again this year to carry out economic development activities as well as on the education file. A few years ago, Education and Economic Development were identified by the Board of Directors as being of special interest for NWAC to focus on because improved outcomes in both these domains has the potential to have a positive impact and outcome on the lives of Aboriginal women and empowers them to make positive changes in their lives. Our theme this year is reflective of this notion.

The third Aboriginal Women's Summit (NAWS III) was held in November in Winnipeg. Prior to this event, a meeting between high-level Manitoba government representatives, Manitoba Chiefs and all NAO leaders was held in Gatineau to discuss the purpose and focus of NAWS III. NAWS III focused on the issue of missing and murdered women as opposed to previous NAWS events that had more of a general focus. Several of NWAC's Board of Directors attended this event in Winnipeg with Michèle co-chairing the session. It is important to note here that NWAC did not co-host as we had minimal involvement in the planning of NAWS III. The next NAWS will be held in Nova Scotia in the fall of 2014.

December and January were very 'active' months for Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal organizations in Ottawa and across Canada. It was on December 11 that Chief Theresa Spence went on a hunger strike to protest the actions or non-action of the Federal Government in their lack of response to what had been promised to Chiefs in a meeting they had with the Prime Minister and the Governor General the previous year. Chief Spence's protest was to bring public attention to the plight of Aboriginal people in Canada. The Idle No More movement also took wind at about the same time as Chief Spence's fast on Victoria Island. Michèle spent a great amount of time with Chief Spence to show support and Michèle, as well as NWAC staff, participated in many Idle No More events here in Ottawa.

In February, I attended the launching of the Human Rights Watch report on Parliament Hill, which garnered a lot of attention because it clearly documents the maltreatment of Aboriginal women and girls by the RCMP in northern BC. The Human Rights Watch is one of the world's leading independent organization that is dedicated to defending and protecting human rights. They carry out rigorous and objective investigations and through their advocacy put pressure on governments for action where human rights are violated. Needless to say, the release of this report by such a group really caused a lot of controversy with the Government, especially with the RCMP. Also in February, the Directors and I had a one-day retreat. The retreat gives us, the senior managers of NWAC, an opportunity to monitor NWAC's path vis-a-vis its' mission, goals and NWAC's five-year strategic plan and helps us to plan our work for the coming year and to work on the resolutions that were put forward at the previous AGA assembly.

I attended the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in New York in March, which enabled me to connect with other women from many other nations to hear and witness first-hand the work they do within their respective regions to improve the lives of women. There are many networking opportunities that arise at attending these types of forums. For example, I made connections with union people, who provide NWAC with financial assistance and other support throughout the year, politicians from Canada and elsewhere and with Indigenous women from other countries who share what is happening in their country pertaining to their cause. It is beneficial to me to hear what other Indigenous women's organizations are doing and to keep abreast of where the Indigenous women's movement is heading.

I also participated and assisted Michèle Audette, Irene Goodwin and members of the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA) in a second formal presentation to the Intra-American Human Rights Commission in Washington, DC. Because of NWAC and FAFIA's efforts, IAHRRC commissioners will have visited Canada for the first time this week. This is no small victory for NWAC! In addition, due in part to NWAC's efforts, as well as others, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and James Anaya, Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, will also be visiting Canada in the fall.

The mere fact that these two other international bodies see a need to visit Canada to investigate the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and the current situation of Aboriginals in Canada already tarnishes Canada's reputation world-wide. Again, NWAC should be applauded for their ongoing efforts over the years to bring world-wide attention to our situation.

In collaboration with the Assembly of First Nations, NWAC co-hosted the Forum on Violence Against Aboriginal women that was held in Edmonton AB in April. This event was attended by about 400 people, mostly Aboriginal, but there was a significant number of others representing police agencies and provincial/territorial governments. An outcome of the Forum will be the development of a National

Action Plan to end Violence that NWAC is working to develop in participation with the AFN, Pauktuutit, Métis Women's Council, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and provincial government representatives. The development of a National Action Plan to end violence is also a goal of the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group, which NWAC is part of. Most of the NWAC Board of Directors attended this major event with Michèle Audette being one of the co-chairs.

In May, a formal presentation was made to the recently-struck 'Special Committee on Violence Against Indigenous Women', which is chaired by Stella Ambler, MP from Ontario. The committee members adopted the following motion concerning NWAC's role with this committee which reads as follows: *"That NWAC be designated as an expert witness and that it be invited to speak at the beginning of each of the themes (Violence and its causes, Front Line Assistance, Preventing Violence Against Women) and that it will be welcome to attend all public meetings."*

We will monitor the activities of the Committee closely and ensure that this motion is adhered to as the Committee carries out its' mandate in the fall and winter and will report back to you upon its completion.

There was significant NWAC participation, both inside and outside the Supreme Court of Canada, during the Bedford Case Hearing on June 13. The Bedford Case is about the legalization of prostitution which NWAC is opposing. The Supreme Court's decision on this matter will be made known in the fall. Those are the highlights of the past year. Obviously, there are many other activities that have kept me and the staff busy at the NWAC office. The overall management of staff and the severe budgetary cuts that NWAC has experienced in the past year (100% of the health budget was cut in April 2012) and with additional cuts upon on this year (30% cuts for projects) and the next fiscal year (10% on core funding) poses additional challenges on NWAC. But, with perseverance, commitment, unity and support by and from the NWAC BODs, members and staff, I am confident that NWAC will arise from this challenge as it has done so since its arrival on the Canadian political scene!

Migwech, Merci, Thank you!

Claudette Dumont-Smith

Current Files

Labour Market Development

Submitted by: Elizabeth Williams, A/Director

Overview

The Labour Market Development (LMD) department provides a dedicated focus in the areas of employment, training, labour market programming and policies in regards to Aboriginal women in Canada. Over the year, the LMD team has worked hard to ensure effective delivery and support of sub-agreement holders through increased assessment of quarterly reporting documentation and client case management. A primary focus of the LMD department has been and will continue to be centered on the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) programming beyond 2015, stakeholders' engagement, strategic planning and partnership building.

Projects

Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS)

The Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) began October 1, 2010 and will end March 31, 2015.

In February, 2013 an ASETS coordinators' session was held in Toronto, Ontario. New templates and standardizing the reporting process at the sub-agreement level were presented. During this session it became apparent that additional training on the KETO database was required. KETO database training was held in May, 2013 to assist sub-agreement holders with accurate data entry and to ensure accurate reporting. Accountability has been a primary focus during the past year. NWAC has introduced several new forms and reporting formats to be used at the sub-agreement level with the reporting becoming more accurate and concise with each quarter. NWAC has a staff member that is dedicated primarily on the input of data on the KETO system and in dealing directly with the PTMA's on any issues they may be experiencing with this system.

The LMD department has developed partnerships that have enhanced economic opportunities for the Aboriginal women NWAC represents. An innovative partnership was developed between Correctional Services Canada and NWAC for Aboriginal women to train to become correctional workers. This partnership will work two-fold in that it will serve as an incentive for Aboriginal women to embark on a well-paying career and also provide Aboriginal women and their families a means to be financially secure during their training period. In addition, in partnership with the Province of New Brunswick the Tobique First Nation is offering a 20-week program called "Caring for our People". The program is providing 25 First Nations women with the tools required to move forward in either Early Childhood Education or Personal Support Worker programs.

Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA)

The 2012/2013 Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) began in August 2012. Despite its very late start, NWAC was able to accomplish the work and achieve success on this shortened timeline. The project highlighted best practices for recruiting and retaining Aboriginal women and networking with the public and private sector through tradeshows, forums etc. and the development of a web portal for to be used by the ASETS Coordinators. An Orientation Manual for the ASETS project was also developed through the SPA project. The project documents are currently in draft form and are being reviewed by NWAC staff and the Projects' Committee before they are to be distributed.

The 2013/2014 SPA project has been approved with a more early start date for this fiscal year. The SPA work plan includes consultations regarding the ASETS program that hopefully will go beyond 2015, stakeholder engagement, strategic planning and partnership building.

Under SPA, NWAC will continue to pursue engagement and partnership building with the private sector, government and industry, stakeholders, and post-secondary/academic institutions. NWAC collaborates with HRSDC on emerging policy and program issues and is able to participate in meetings and consultations organized by HRSDC through the SPA agreement.

Helen Bassett Commemorative Student Award 2012

Since 2003, four young Aboriginal women have received the annual Helen Bassett award for post-secondary studies. Fifty-four completed applications were reviewed thoroughly and four applications, representing the four directions, were chosen for the Helen Bassett Commemorative Student Award for 2012. NWAC was pleased to present the award to the following outstanding young Aboriginal women of Inuit, Métis and First Nations descent:

NORTH: Claire Anderson
SOUTH: Chrystal Desilets
EAST: Elizabeth Zarpa
WEST: Julia McGraw

Gathering Together in One Place - Cultural Connections for Aboriginal Youth

The Cultural Connections for Aboriginal Youth (CCAY) project is a project funded by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. NWAC hosted "Gathering Together in One Place", a two-day forum for young Aboriginal women between the ages of 18-24. The gathering gave young Aboriginal women the opportunity to participate in a one-day financial literacy workshop, and to share their personal barriers to employment and economic participation and to identify solutions on how to overcome these barriers. The project's main goal was to empower young Aboriginal women to help them realize their leadership potential. The gathering took place in Toronto, Ontario on March 7-8, 2013. Twenty-five young women from across Canada, an Elder, a graphic note-taker and a film-maker to document the event attended this event. From this gathering a short video and graphic posters were created as resources to address barriers young Aboriginal women face as they seek employment.



Aboriginal Women’s Entrepreneurs Network (AWEN)

The Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development (AANDC) department funded a project entitled, “Developing an Aboriginal Women’s Entrepreneurship Network”. Additional work to further develop the Network will be ongoing in this fiscal year as NWAC was again successful in acquiring funds for the Network implementation phase. A full-time coordinator will be hired to carry out the activities related to this project.



Financial Literacy and Essential Skills Project

With funding support from AANDC, NWAC created a Financial Literacy Project for young Aboriginal women between the ages of 18-30. The workshop was based on a need assessment survey that was distributed through NWAC’s networks and completed by approximately 250 Aboriginal women. The

project focused on participants becoming knowledgeable and informed in planning and making financial decisions about their future, understanding the role that money plays in their lives particularly in terms of economic security and eventual prosperity, and how to treat money as a tool to realize their potential and make their dreams a reality throughout their lives were issues addressed at these workshops. The workshops were held in Halifax (12 participants), Edmonton (20 participants) and Toronto (45 participants) and were held in February and March 2013.



NWAC North/West Financial Literacy workshop participants in Edmonton, AB.

Upcoming Priorities

In the coming year, NWAC will focus on developing supportive partnerships with government and industry, stakeholders and post-secondary/academic institutions and will continue to submit proposals to seek additional funding to improve the economic well-being of Aboriginal women and girls.

Violence Prevention & Safety Department

Submitted by: Irene Goodwin, Director

The Violence Prevention and Safety department is new in name, but not in spirit. Formally referred to as the “Evidence to Action” department and previously, the “Sisters In Spirit” department, the new name reflects an evolving approach to addressing violence prevention and safety in the lives of Aboriginal women and girls and recognizes that violence affects Aboriginal women and girls throughout their lives – and that violence is experienced by them in many forms. Currently the Violence Prevention and Safety department has two ongoing projects:

- Evidence to Action II, funded by Status of Women Canada
- Trafficking Project “Boyfriend or Not?”, funded by the United States Embassy

Photos: Top Right, NWAC Family Gathering, Wendake QC (Feb 2013).

Bottom Right, NWAC Life Stories Project, Ottawa ON (Dec 2012)



Evidence to Action II Project Update:

The overall goal of this project is 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. In this regard, the project has successfully undertaken many activities organized around four key thematic areas: education, tools for communities, partnerships, and community responsiveness which act 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. This project is in its final fiscal year and ends April 2014.



A brief summary of work undertaken in the last year:

SIS Vigils

Every October 4th, thousands of people gather together to honour the memory and raise awareness of the many missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. For October 4, 2012, an unprecedented total of 175 vigils took place across Canada and internationally. The virtual candlelight vigils website at www.October4th.ca had as of October 4th, more than 600 virtual candles lit, with several dozen touching and heartfelt dedications on the 2012 Dedications page. Based on a follow up

survey with vigil organizers, it is estimated that approximately 11,200 people attended Vigils across Canada and internationally on October 4, 2012.

For October 2013, we hope to surpass previous Vigil numbers and have mobilized early to better support organizers. This year, NWAC is offering free 2013 SIS Vigil kits to the first 200 registrants. The 2013 SIS Vigil Kits will include 25 SIS Balloons and 50 October 4th SIS Stickers along with October 4th paper materials and information.

Family Gathering

The 2012/13 Dialogue for Families (Family Gathering) was held on February 2-3rd 2013 in Wendake QC. In attendance were 24 family members of a missing or murdered Aboriginal woman or girl, representing all directions (North, South, East, and West). The purpose of the Family Gathering is to provide a safe and caring environment for families to meet and discuss the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada; this important event is significant in assessing the needs of families, communities, regions, and the Nation in relation to this issue. In addition, this event also provides families an opportunity to share their experiences and learn from each other, honour their loved one(s), and give hope and support to each other. It also enables an engagement opportunity for families to directly impact and generate greater awareness of the issues; in this Spirit two new videos were created during the family gathering. The first was a video montage, titled "We All Have A Role" and the second was to initiate an NWAC Family Legacy Project. In addition to these a special evening session was held for families to create and take home their own "faceless doll". Following the event a report to families was prepared and is available on the NWAC website. Planning for the 2013-14 Family Gathering has begun and is tentatively scheduled to be held in Ottawa, ON in September 2013.

Life Stories

In the 2012-13 fiscal year, 3 digital life stories were created honouring the lives of Evangeline Billy, Gladys Simon and Virginia Pictou-Noyes. These digital life stories build on NWAC's legacy of working directly with families who have a missing or murdered loved one and highlight the importance of sharing, caring, raising awareness and working towards prevention. This unique process enabled family members to share the life story of their daughter, sister, mother or grandmother and reflect on their experiences with the justice system, the media, victim services and other support services. The digital Life Stories DVD is available in English and French (English with French subtitles). NWAC staff is gearing up for the next set of digital life stories, which is tentatively scheduled for September 2013.

Community Resource Guide (CRG)

This unique and highly demanded NWAC resource is an innovative and informative tool designed to answer the question: "What can I do to help the families of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls?" This plain-language publication that has been designed to assist individuals, communities, educators, service providers and other allies with the necessary information and tools to work in a culturally appropriate and sensitive manner with families who have lost a loved one. It contains a poster, three fact sheets, 10 toolkits and other resources for educators as well as a CD for easy access to electronic files for printing and distribution. Dissemination of this key resource continues using four key mediums: hard copies, electronic on USB, reprinted CDs as well as online for free download from the

NWAC website. Since the product launch in early 2012, more than 600 hard copies, 300 CDs, and 100 USB's have been distributed.

Community Engagement Workshops (CEW)

As part of our commitment to the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls, in the 2012/13 fiscal year a total of 20 CEWs were held; the final count of Canadians participating is 968 individuals. Participants ranged from family members of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls, community members, service providers, provincial and territorial representatives, youth/students and Aboriginal leadership from all across the country. 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. In response to families, communities and CEW participants, 2 new themes were added: October 4th Sisters In Spirit Vigils, and the NWAC Faceless Doll Legacy Project. Demand for NWAC CEWs on the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls continue to be received, efforts to minimize costs and develop new methods for delivery such as interactive webinars are being explored and tested.

Clinical Tool

This new tool and resource, entitled *Good Relations: Supporting Aboriginal Women and Families Who have Experienced Violence* has been developed for clinical and front-line practitioners and organizations who work directly with Aboriginal women and their families who have experienced violence. Recently completed, this product has been translated and is currently undergoing desk top publishing and formatting before final printing and dissemination in the last half of this fiscal year. The development of this new resource was intensive with direct input of more than 120 individuals, including pilot testing in five (5) locations, namely Neechi (Edmonton AB), Many Rivers (Whitehorse YK), Native Women's Transition Centre (Winnipeg MB), Kaushee's Place (Whitehorse YK), and Elsipogtog First Nation (Elsipogtog NB). In total, 8 locations provided input into the development of the clinical tool, including 2 NWAC community engagement workshops (Edmonton, AB and Winnipeg, MB) and 2 Family Gatherings (Jan 2012 and Feb 2013) to ensure family members were engaged in the development process.

National and International Conferences and Meetings/Partnership Development & Collaboration

The NWAC President, Executive Director, Violence Prevention and Safety director and NWAC staff continue to maintain an active role and presence in addressing the high levels of violence experienced by Aboriginal women and girls, and in particular, 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 are critical in mobilizing change. In this effort, NWAC participates in key leadership and decision making forums, including the Council of the Federation, the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group, and others. Existing partnerships were maintained and strengthened and include close and mutually supportive relationships such as the Assembly of First Nations, National Aboriginal Friendship Centres, KAIROS, Amnesty International, NWAC PTMAs, and National Aboriginal Organizations.

Human Trafficking “Boyfriend or Not?” Project Update:

NWAC has received funding from the US Embassy to look at how Aboriginal women who are currently being exploited by the sex trade, who have been exploited in the sex trade in the past, or who have experienced human trafficking understand and define their relationships with men, especially men who may direct or control their activities. Research conducted with Indigenous women suggests that women’s perception of the role of their male ‘partners’ is changing. This project provides a venue for individual women to share their understanding and knowledge gained from their life experiences. The outcome will be a report that enables a better understanding of the interpersonal relationships and dynamics that underpin sex trafficking. This research is relevant to situations of international or cross-border trafficking of Aboriginal women, as well as to situations of internal trafficking. NWAC has been liaising with our partner organizations including US partners, advising them of its project goals, timeframes, and process. NWAC staff has established a set of ‘key characteristics’ for individuals to participate in the interview process; and has begun to utilize its partner networks to identify Aboriginal women who meet these desired characteristics. A draft interview matrix has been developed and written in plain language to guide the individual interviews with Aboriginal women participants. A FAQ document has been developed. Consultations with our selected partner organizations are ongoing and a ‘literature review’ is currently being conducted. The interviews with Aboriginal women are scheduled to begin in August 2013. The final report will be made available in both official languages and will be available on the NWAC website. The project is expected to be completed by November 2013.

2012 October 4th Sisters In Spirit Photos: Left, Whitehorse Yukon. Centre-left, Regina First Nations University (Saskatchewan). Centre-right, Ottawa, Ontario. Far right, Fort Albany First Nation, Ontario.



Health and Environment Department Update

Submitted by: Erin Corston, Health and Environment Director

Department Goals

Regardless of the significant changes that have occurred within the Health and Environment Department, its goal remains unchanged, and that is to raise awareness of the disproportionate impacts Aboriginal women experience due to colonization, including how our health and well being is determined by the state of the environment. We also aim to contribute towards the development of sustainable solutions in an effort to create positive change in Aboriginal women's overall health status.

The Health and Environment Department at NWAC was founded and built at a time when the Federal Government actively sought input by all sectors of the Aboriginal population (including Status and non-Status First Nations regardless of residency, and Metis and Inuit peoples) in the development and implementation of its mandate. All National Aboriginal Organizations (NAO's) were engaged at the national level, and culturally relevant gender based analysis was being promoted and undertaken by several Federal Departments, further raising awareness of the value of Aboriginal women's perspectives and needs.

The Aboriginal health and environment landscape however has since been in flux. The narrowed scope of the Federal Government's obligations to Aboriginal peoples and the organizations that represent them has initiated a definitive shift away from meaningful engagement to an environment where NAO's and other stakeholders are competing for the same funding opportunities to engage in Federal initiatives, and even to sustain themselves. The Health and Environment Department, and NWAC more broadly, has responded to this shift and actively competes for available funds, often with mainstream organizations to work on issues like Diabetes and Climate Change. While mainstream organizations typically have more capacity to compete for these funds NWAC has experienced some success in securing support to continue our important work. Our focus on strengthening current partnerships and expanding our network of allies, and increasing our visibility and relevancy at the local level has been key to our success.

This past year has seen a number of multi-year projects come to an end. This report will focus on three major projects and provides an update on NWAC's work with the National Council on Species at Risk.

Health and Environment Activities

The Legacy of Residential Schools and Pathways to Reconciliation

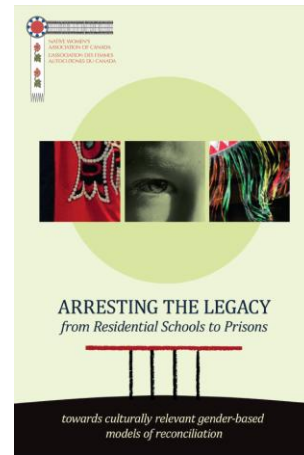
Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) created the Advocacy and Public Information Program (APIP) fund following the Indian Residential School (IRS) settlement agreement as

a way to ensure survivors of residential schools received information related to their rights to apply to the Common Experience Payment (CEP) through the Independent Assessment Process (IAP).

The fund was slated to run three years, but was extended one year, to 2013. With the CEP and IAP deadlines closed, the last funding cycle moved away from *advocacy and public information* for survivors to *reconciliation based projects* involving Aboriginal and non Aboriginal youth. NWACs Pathways to Reconciliation project builds on work conducted in three previous APIP cycles, with the following outcomes:

2009-2010 – NWAC developed an academic comparative country based research paper on *culturally relevant gender based models of reconciliation*, which can be found on the NWAC website.

2010-2011 – This research was linked to communities through increased engagement with IRS survivors and resulted development of a national project steering committee and the development of a research/dialogue toolkit entitled: **Arresting the Legacy from Residential Schools to Prisons**, which is available on the website.



Legacy NWAC

2011-2012 – The Arrest the Legacy toolkit was used to engage communities in a dialogue on the legacy of residential schools. people in Saskatchewan, BC, NWT and Ontario participated Aboriginal women and girls who had been in conflict with the law criminalized and incarcerated, as well as those who work with youth custody and incarcerated women.

Over 300 including and/or girls in



The final report and recommendations gleaned from these dialogues were written up in the **Gender Matters Building Strength in Reconciliation** report in the spring of 2012. As part of this funding cycle NWAC also developed partnerships and sponsored two "Pathways to Reconciliation" workshops, with groups of Aboriginal high school students (In Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and in Winnipeg). Students learned more about residential school though talks with survivors. NWAC also supported the development of youth

led art based and social media projects on residential school issues. The two videos developed as part of this work are available on YouTube and NWACs website.

2012-13 – In the summer of 2012 NWAC conducted three focused leadership workshops on residential schools, one in Toronto, another in Hobbema (Luis Bull), and one with the Cowichan Tribes of BC. IRS survivors, and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth participated in the workshops; their input used to develop the educational video called **Talk To Them**.



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hope was to link this project to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings in Montreal in the spring of 2013, but unfortunately the event took place after funding cycle had ended.

Understanding From Within (UFW): A Research Project on Neurological Conditions

In 2010 NWAC was successful in obtaining funding through the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) to undertake research to better understand how Aboriginal peoples conceptualize neurological conditions and the impacts on their families and communities, and the resources and supports needed to provide culturally safe and appropriate care.

Following an intensive data collection and analysis process, NWAC's three-year research project wrapped up at the end of March 2013. Among other things, the research findings illustrated how little we know about the scope of impacts experienced by families, caregivers, and communities due to neurological conditions. Major themes and sub themes emerged in the research, along with a series of recommendations intended to improve relations between the health care system and Aboriginal peoples, and intended to promote the importance of Aboriginal control of health care services. For the full research report see www.nwac.ca.

In addition to the research findings, NWAC produced a series of community resources in poster format. Four posters were developed: One on dementia, one on traumatic brain injury, one on epilepsy, and one promoting the benefits of Aboriginal patient advocates (posters are available for download from the NWAC website).



The posters employ a new technology called “augmented reality”, or AR. The technology allows digital information to be superimposed, or augmented, onto a live view of the physical, real-world environment, viewable with a special app. This basically means that when viewed through a device (such as an iPhone, iPad, or Android) running the Layar app, these one-dimensional posters come alive in video format. Layar is available for free on the iStore, the Android Market Place, and online.

NWAC's advisory committee recommended that the community resources be accessible in terms of the language and messaging, and target young Aboriginal people. The research team worked with a number of partners to create these unique resources and believes they each tell a story that represents the scope of impacts neurological conditions have on our communities.

TIPI Dreams - Removing Barriers and Improving Access to Culturally Relevant Gender Specific HIV/AIDS Prevention Information among Hard-to-Reach, at-Risk Aboriginal women and girls

TIPI Dreams was designed to respond to the high rates of HIV among Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. The purpose of the project was to gather perspectives about the unique experiences of “high-risk” Aboriginal women and girls to inform the design and development of HIV awareness and prevention materials.

TIPI Dreams is a toolkit that consists of a youth friendly screenplay with five separate but connected scenes that were developed to capture the essence of some of the key issues by Aboriginal girls in care, and to trigger discussion around

some of the more difficult aspects of sexually transmitted diseases. Shot in Vancouver with a mixture of professional Aboriginal youth actors and non-actors, the film features an original hip hop song on HIV prevention by Wanda Wuttunee, who used words and information from the 12 focus groups NWAC held to write the lyrics. The kit also includes a cinema forum guidebook.

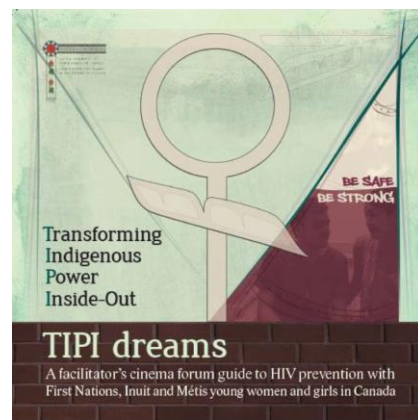
TIPI Dreams was a part time project funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), that engaged over sixty at risk Aboriginal women and girls, along with staff from over a dozen agencies that work with them. Information gathered from the implementation of this project was used to develop this innovative, adaptive toolkit. It is hoped that this work 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.

TIPI Dreams was piloted and is currently undergoing revision to enhance the male role, understanding that in order to promote getting tested among women and girls, their partners (boys and men) must get tested too. This newer revamped version of TIPI Dreams will reflect input we received during the piloting phase of the project, and will include a Francophone version of the video.

Environment, and the National Aboriginal Council on Species at Risk (NACOSAR)

NWAC has been an active, and effective NACOSAR member since the Council’s inception in 2005. The Council’s role is to advise the Minister of Environment on the administration of the Species At Risk Act (SARA), and to provide advice and recommendations to the Canadian Endangered Species Conservation Council.

Each year, Council members are nominated on a rotating basis. This past year, NWAC’s seat was up for nomination, and while all National Aboriginal Organizations (NAO’s) have historically been represented on the NACOSAR since its inception, NWAC’s re-nomination of Carrie Terbasket was not accepted.



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Fortunately, an unexpected and unprecedented turn of events has transpired. On July 15, 2013 NWAC received confirmation from the Minister's office that our three (3) nominations to the Council have been accepted. Departing Minister Peter Kent has secured a majority number of seats on the National Council for NWAC. This is effective immediately and the appointments are for three years. We are happy to report that NWAC President Michele Audette, returning Council member Carrie Terbasket, and newly appointed member, Melissa Daniels are NWAC's political representatives on the National Council on Species at Risk!

In October 2012 NACOSAR members participated in a Ministerial Roundtable along with a variety of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal stakeholders. Changes to the SARA are imminent and as such the objective of the roundtable was to *"seek views on major issues under SARA and opportunities for improvement, including ways to support collaborative approaches to species conservation"*. The department has yet to generate the roundtable meeting report, however is planning a follow-up roundtable in the fall of 2013. A date has yet to be confirmed.

NWAC has developed a series of policy papers related to the implementation of the SARA and has formally requested a response from the department as to how they will address our concerns. We continue to advocate for gender equitable representation on the NACOSAR, and have resubmitted nominations for membership. A response from Environment Canada has yet to be received.

International Affairs and International Affairs and Human Rights (IAHR)

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

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. 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 under-funding to on-reserve education, all forms of discrimination against women, poverty, ongoing sexual exploitation and trafficking of women and girls, the lack of clean water, and other violations to our basic human rights.

This year we also worked with our many partners through several Coalitions to advance the rights of Indigenous women, including through our participation as Interveners in the *Bedford case* which went to the Supreme Court of Canada on the issue of the legalization of prostitution.

Projects and Responses to Domestic Legislative Measures:

Aboriginal Peoples and Leadership – September 2012 - March 2013

The Native Women's Association of Canada worked to build on Aboriginal women's leadership skills and to expand our knowledge on various ways to support women in decision-making and the economy. We met with women from across Canada to build on existing knowledge by identifying broadly the understanding of, motivations for, and patterns of leadership among Aboriginal women. The project also aimed to identify innovative practices and methods of engaging women in leadership and decision-making roles at all levels of society. We were pleased to welcome our new President, Michèle Audette as our new leader and look forward to continuing to accomplish great things together!

Good 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 many of the Presidents and Executive Directors from our PTMAs to do a Workshop in Communications as part of implementing the Strategic Plan to help empower women to respond to media inquiries, press releases, etc. in a way that will best communicate the great work we are all doing.

NWAC's IAHR also hosted a two-day Directors' Strategic Planning Session to identify ways to carry out our Vision Statement and General Objectives and to report on how we are implementing them. We also

worked to identify areas for priority action for the coming year. NWAC continues to pursue objectives that will support Aboriginal women and their families to live healthy lifestyles by maintaining balance; traditional ways; accept and exercise their responsibilities to contribute to be able to live in communities that are strong and healthy. As a national organization for Aboriginal women, we seek to enhance health, social, economic, cultural, and political outcomes for Aboriginal women in Canada. These objectives will continue to drive our work over the coming year.

Education

This time last year NWAC staff prepared an education project in collaboration with Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. The focus for this project was to provide AANDC with important feedback and input from Aboriginal women representatives from our PTMAs on gendering a *First Nations Education Act*. AANDC's priority for this project was to collect data that was of relevance for First Nations women and girls on-reserve. While the Act was rejected by Aboriginal leaders in the fall of 2012, NWAC's culminating report, titled *Gendering First Nations Education Reform*, still maintains a great deal of relevance for education in Canada.

The final document produced from this project features the input from a focus group session that occurred at the 2012 AGA in Saskatchewan as well as a survey on language and culture. There are many recommendations collected from the Aboriginal women that go beyond AANDC's requirements of First Nations women and girls on-reserve. The recommendations also range from a variety of levels, and thus the final report is of relevance for policy makers, principals, teachers, and more. For more details and a complete review of findings and recommendations, please read the full report. NWAC is continuing its pursuit to secure funding for future projects to build on the work that has already been accomplished.

Standing Committee and Human Rights Committee Presentations 2012-2013

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 S-2: Family Homes on Reserves and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act*, 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:

Concordia University - February 2013 - Montreal, Canada

Both the IAHR Director and NWAC President participated on a panel on the theme, "Thirty Years of Inequality: Indigenous Peoples and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms." The presenters discussed the Charter of Rights and Freedoms' effectiveness in protecting Aboriginal rights, including various laws and policies of the Canadian government regarding Indigenous peoples. The panel engaged in discussion and responded to questions from participants attending the meeting at the Samuel Bronfman Centre. This discussion panel was organized by Concordia's School of Community and Public Affairs.

Trafficking in Persons - March 2013 – London, Canada

Western University hosted a conference to discuss issues surrounding human trafficking. Hosted by the Violence Against Women Learning Network (Learning Network), the Human Trafficking Forum brought together speakers from across Canada who shared knowledge and perspectives regarding human trafficking, discussed recent policy and legislation changes, human rights concerns and understanding the experience of and impacts on victims. NWAC IAHR presented in the exchange that brought members of 6 anti-trafficking coalitions from across Ontario and government representatives together to share initiatives, identify gaps, emerging issues and promising responses.

Canadian Women's Foundation - Report on Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Aboriginal Women and Girls

Recently NWAC conducted research into the issue of human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. This report was conducted for the Canadian Women's Foundation Task Force on Trafficking of Women and Girls in Canada as an aide to their preparations to explore human trafficking in Canada on a national scale.

An extensive review of the literature, a survey, and many interviews with frontline workers, experiential women, and others were collected into one report. The results of the research highlight the typical path and experiences of Aboriginal women and girls who are pulled into human trafficking for sexual exploitation. This is a path marked by poverty, abuse, unstable homes, and a lack of economic alternatives. Coming from troubled homes where such standards as a decent education and healthy living skills and practices had little opportunity to develop, Aboriginal women and girls often become vulnerable to sexual exploiters (pimps, johns, madams) when moving to cities for more opportunities. Faced with isolation, a lack of support programs and networks, and lacking the education or skills to gain alternate employment, many would often become vulnerable targets to exploitative pimps and johns.

When it comes to exiting sexual exploitation, many are blocked by a lack of supports, housing, and viable alternate economic opportunities. That being said, when it came to solutions, the research pushed forth a clear message of what worked: top-down is opposite to what is needed; after a life-time of being pushed around, commanded, and their own needs discarded and pushed aside, what these women and young girls need is respect, validation, flexibility in treatment, a judgment-free atmosphere, safe housing, childcare, and health care, to name a few. By engaging with these women in a respectful manner and not dictating change, survivors are better able to take charge of their lives and begin to build the life skills and faith-in-self needed to drastically change their lives. One of the most impactful exiting factors was when these women and girls were able to work with a survivor, someone who provided living proof that change and an alternate way of life were possible for them as well.

To support these Aboriginal women and girls, and any sexually exploited woman in Canada, the Native Women's Association of Canada advocates for the decriminalization of women prostitutes in Canada and the criminalization of johns, pimps, and others who seek to profit through exploiting these women

and girls for the purposes of sex acts. The model supported by NWAC is similar to the Nordic model, and bears much healthier results than an approach that effectively legalizes prostitution as a viable trade or continues to persecute women who are already facing poverty and dealing with childhood and sexual trauma. NWAC's position against the legalization of prostitution in the Bedford case is consistent with the results that were discovered in this research.

Universal Periodic Review – March 2013 – 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 Universal Periodic Review for Canada's review and attended the United Nations in Geneva in March 2013. 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.

United Nations Commission on the Status of Women - March 2013 - New York City, New York

A global policy-making body, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a functional commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), dedicated exclusively to the promotion of gender equality and the advancement of women. Every year, representatives of Member States gather at the United Nations Headquarters in New York to evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and advancement of women worldwide. Representatives from Member States, UN entities, and NGOs in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, like NWAC, attended the 57th session.

The session included a high-level round table, interactive dialogues and panels, and parallel events and had key areas of focus: Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls; the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS; key gender equality issues to be reflected in the post-2015 development framework. The Commission on the Status of Women adopted agreed conclusions on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.

UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues - May 2013 – New York City, New York

NWAC IAHR also attended the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in May where we brought our youth Board of Directors to build on their capacity, human rights education 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 Samantha Lewis, our Youth Board member from the East, presented the Statement on Violence Against Indigenous Women on behalf of the NWAC and its partners. 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 to ensure the integration of Aboriginal women's views at all the discussions held during the sessions.

Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – July 2013 - Geneva, Switzerland

NWAC along with other Aboriginal and equality-seeking organizations participated 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 implemented.

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 and submitted its own report on the issue of Access to Justice.

Creation of the Indigenous Women's Fund of Canada - June 2013

The IAHR team worked all year to complete necessary requirements to create the Indigenous Women's Fund of Canada (IWFC), along with its By-laws, which was duly incorporated in June 2013. Once the By-laws are passed at the NWAC Annual General Assembly, the IWFC can finally receive charitable status.

Upcoming Priorities

IAHR is preparing for the Indigenous Women's Global Meeting in October 2013 and is currently awaiting approval of funding for other projects on Civic Participation, Education and Fundraising.

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, Canadian Women's Foundation, Canadian Labour Congress and many national Unions, Assembly of First Nations, National Association of Friendship Centres, Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action, Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, The First Nations Child & Family Caring Society, Paul Joffe, Amnesty International, KAIROS Canada, Concertation des Luttes Contre L'Exploitation Sexuelle, Vancouver Rape Relief Shelter, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Canadian Human Rights Commission, and many other organizations.

Youth

Submitted by: Brittany Jones, LMD Youth Coordinator

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 2012

At the 2011 NWAC AGA there was a youth 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.

NAFC Annual Youth Forum

The National Association of Friendship Centres invited NWAC to their Annual Youth Forum in North Battleford, SK in July 2013. The LMD Youth Coordinator and Outreach Coordinator were able to attend the event and interact with youth from across Canada. They also facilitated a one hour Financial Literacy Introduction to inform the youth on this workshop offered by NWAC. We have a good working relationship with the NAFC Youth Program and attending this event helped to strengthen this relationship.

*For information on the NWAC Financial Literacy Project and Cultural Connections for Aboriginal Youth see the Labour Market Development section