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Women are agents of change. Our creation story was given to us by Woman. In our creation story, Woman will remember the teachings first, awaken first, heal first, stand strong and speak her voice again. And so today at IDHC, women play key roles in the healing of our communities — with the support of our men — as was prophesied.

We prayed for change, we hoped for change, and we worked toward change. And now we are seeing change.

This may be a challenging and stressful time for many Indigenous people and communities due to social, political, and economic factors that exacerbate many pre-existing problems. The emerging issues from COVID-19 have a significant impact on Indigenous peoples who have co-morbid medical conditions such as diabetes, as well as people who need to work while also having to care for their family members.

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BALANCE – BEING MEDICINE

ndian Country continues to reel from Canada's harsh colonial approaches that have negatively impacted the lives of Indigenous women, families and communities. As we prepare to release our fourth edition of She is Wise magazine, we are confronted with the disturbing news of the discovery of 215+ children buried in a mass unmarked grave at the former Kamloops Residential School.

This, coupled with the release of Canada's Federal Pathways document and the 2021 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People National Action Plan, has been distressing to all of us.

Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) honours the children who were taken from their families, who never made it home, and who were not cared for both in life and death by those who were supposed to protect them. ONWA recognizes our responsibility to continue to advocate for justice and healing for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+, as well as their survivors and families.

As we try to convince ourselves that church and state understand what reconciliation means, we remember that in the end, we only have each other. As an Indigenous women's organization, ONWA recognizes the need for balance. We know that we alone cannot undo what has been done to us. We acknowledge the men who have always stepped up to support Indigenous women's work - who took a stand with us, walked and protested with us, and fought with us in any way they could.

It is by knowing our responsibilities to each other that we will get through this. Through our interconnectedness, we are all responsible for the safety of Indigenous women and children, communities and nations. Connection is the key for us to move through all of this, together.

It is our responsibility to teach our sons to be kind, caring and supportive of their sisters, their mothers and their grandmothers. It is a man's role to help keep our world safe. For Indigenous women, holding our world together is a very big job. It requires all of us to make safety a priority.

We teach young women they have a right to safety. It is not acceptable that they are denied what makes them feel safe. Indigenous girls need to know they have a right to say, "No!" It is our responsibility to listen when they tell us they have been hurt. We need to act to ensure justice is theirs.

Balance is so important for us right now. Identifying ourselves in connection to our relationships to each other helps us to know our place, our power and our voice. Knowing who we are and where we come from is a privilege that many Indigenous women and children do not have due to Canada's patriarchal values when it comes to Indigeneity.

Now is the time to start organizing homecoming ceremonies and for communities to be funded in order to be able to do so appropriately. Indigenous women and children have been left out in the cold due to colonial practices that have excluded them from what should be their places of safety. ONWA advocates for the implementation of Bill S-3 to ensure that Indigenous women are welcomed back to the community as per their right and the right of their children. Bill S-3 is meant to address sexbased inequities in the Indian Act.

We need community leaders to step up and recognize that we as a people have always made room for family. Families bring their gifts to a community's bundle. That is what true homecoming means. Homecoming is also about making sure Indigenous women are safe, wherever they choose to make their homes.

Creation stories knit our identities together throughout our ancestral lines. The medicine we carry tells us we are all related and interconnected. Embedded in our languages, Indigenous values highlight our roles and responsibilities to care for ourselves and for each other.

Being balanced is good medicine critical to our healing, our wellness, and to our ability to walk as one to ensure safety for Indigenous lives. We know what is needed. Working together we serve and support those who need it most. In our helping roles, we help to heal others and, more often than not, we heal ourselves.

Chi miigwetch,



Both of us, at our core, follow the same teachings, and we believe in the healing model of individual, family, community and nation

Cecil Sveinson

Photo courtesy of Darci Everson

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On the Cover: Cecil Sveinson and Melissa Brown. Photo courtesy of Kevin Settee.



Cora McGuire-Cyrette Executive Director, ONWA

ACKNOWLEDGING THE MEN IN OUR LIVES



ntario Native Women's Association (ONWA) is happy to bring you the fourth edition of She is Wise magazine. In this issue we focus on balance and the importance of Indigenous men in Indigenous women's lives. ONWA commends the work and the healing Indigenous men do in collaboration with

Indigenous women.

In times such as these, we also acknowledge the work that still needs to be done in the area of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. We continue to advocate for the reinstatement of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation to ensure survivors and families of residential schools have the support they need to heal from their childhood experiences.

We recognize that Indigenous women's feminism is not only about Indigenous women and patriarchy. It is about the relationships that brought us to this point in time; the role models that helped us get to this place; and the men who continue to help us with community work. We focus on balance that brings us healing, a voice and safety.

ONWA is pleased to recognize male champions of Indigenous women's causes. Some use the legal system to effect change for Indigenous women and their families. Murray Sinclair, for instance, recognizes the importance of mothers and grandmothers to Indigenous children knowing their language so that they too can protect their language.

Dennis McPherson sees Canada's laws as barriers and understands that Indigenous women need to further their education to bring about change in their lives. Seeking equality for his children drives his responsibility as an educator.

Joseph Morrison wanted to be part of the solution and not the problem. "To respect women is the best way to support women, to stand behind them," he said. Morrison raised his children and developed programs to support his community.

Kevin Redsky walked across Canada raising awareness for the need for youth mental health supports and relationship-building with police services. His Hope in the Darkness initiative continues to draw attention to this important message.

Recently elected Anishinabek Nation Regional Chief Mel Hardy recognizes the need for supports in communities. He prioritizes relationship-building to ensure Indigenous women's leadership is successful in bringing Indigenous women's voices to the table.

SHE*is*WISE

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With honour and respect, we share with you ONWA's concept of balance

Melissa Brown and Cecil Sveinson reflect on what is most beautiful in Indian Country: traditions, healing and inclusivity. The couple ensure Indigenous women, men and youth have access to identity, culture and traditions. They centre Indigenous values to show how everyone has a place in the circle of life.

ONWA applauds Theland Kicknosway's gift to dance, run and sing, which brings healing to Indigenous women, girls, families and communities. Kicknosway acknowledges his mom and aunties who taught him to recognize the importance of Indigenous women. He uses his platform to teach others.

Whether it is Rocking the World or telling the story of an Indigenous woman hero, Stevie Salas understands the power of Indigenous

women and is keen to remind us that it is in our work together that we can do more to help others.

Al Hunter says we must always be prepared to care for families and community members in a good way, to be kind to others, and to be gentle with ourselves. We are grateful for his wisdom which brings peace to the chaos of Indigenous women's work.

We also highlight Collin Graham and André Morriseau, who work in community development and communications, respectively. Each brings a world of knowledge to their area of expertise. Both recognize the critical need to lift up Indigenous women through allyship and amplification of voice.

With honour and respect, we share with you ONWA's concept of balance. Our work together makes us the warriors we are.

In honour of the children who did not make it home, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and their survivors, we dedicate the fourth edition of She is Wise magazine to you.

Chi miigwetch,



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C. Wer win Cypette

We are Ontario's first urban off-reserve Indigenous Child and Youth Advocate Office.

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In addition ensuring our children and youth receive their cultural rights such as welcoming, naming, colors, rites of passage and so.

Services

Advocates Legal and Cultural Support (prevention / crisis mitigation)

- Health mental health, special complex needs
- Education Independent Educational Plans, Behavioral Safety Plans, Vulnerable
- Social 1:1 with children or youth to resolve a variety of barriers from identity, suicide ideation, stabilization, genealogy connections, intergenerational trauma.
- Cultural identify who you are, who you should be re-connected with, why did this happen, what is your purpose

Advocates effectively support the professionals involved with the child or youth from social workers, Office of the Children's Lawyers OCL's, parent, kinship, and adoption

Traditional Knowledge Keeper Program (prevention / de-escalation / stabilization)

- In-home support (by court order or voluntary)
- 1:1 behavioral support
- Respite Services (by court order under the MHA, CYFSA and/or voluntary)
- Secure Treatment (by court order ONLY)

Elder Services

- Spirituality (work within one's self)
- Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being (cultural teachings)

Indigenous Horse Therapy Equine Assisted Learning EAL

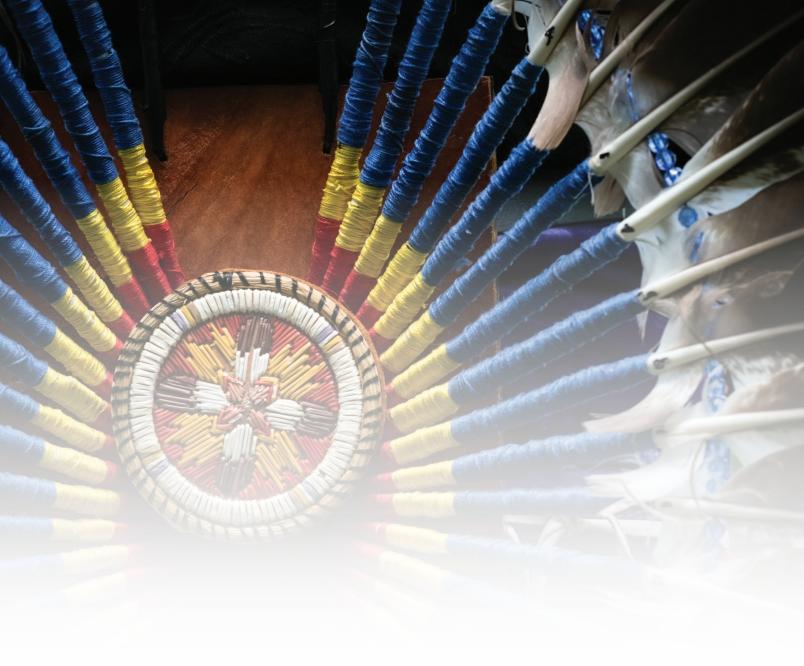
- Pre and post work sheets / classroom
- Children and youth walk and work with horses in stable and arena
- Focus is on Somatic Responses (major emotional distress)
- Opportunity for high school credit *call to inquire for eligibility

Indigenous Dispute Resolution IDR / Indigenous Circle Process ICP

- IDR: Mediation agreements, Plans of Care for children, youth, families, Child Welfare, Bands, School Boards and/or Medical Teams
- IDR: Customary Care Writers, Traditional Customary Care Writers
- ICP: Healing, Grief, Loss, Intergenerational, Talking, Restorative

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We are pleased to support ONWA and to help recognize and celebrate the achievements of the entire ONWA organization.

Congratulations on your 50th Anniversary! We are a proud ONWA supporter and are grateful to the entire team for their leadership, hard work and deep commitment to supporting Indigenous women.

Chi-Miigwetch!

Barry and Laurie Green





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Enterprising Indigenous Women

PARO's EIW program supports Indigenous women entrepreneurs from Northern Ontario who wish to dream big, and start or scale their businesses! Through one-on-one counselling, BizCamps and access to online education, PARO is a one-stop-shop entrepreneur support system that offers enterprising women pathways to achieve their potential.

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This one-stop-shop program provides access to education for women to start and grow their businesses through online streaming video education, designed for flexibility to accommodate our busy schedules!

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For more information on how PARO can support YOU, call 807-625-0328 or email eiw@paro.ca





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ν≥ρ σορδ.ρι, δασ., ρνηιδογηφος.

Mook'am Kwe: She Rises BizCamp

In January 2021, PARO launched our first exclusively virtual Indigenous women–focused pilot program, named through ceremony as Mooka'am Kwe: She Rises, a 15-week BizCamp that provides wraparound supports for Indigenous women who want to scale their businesses in Northern Ontario. Mooka'am Kwe integrates cultural wellness at every step of the participants' business journey; with the support of Elders, the participants grow their businesses while connecting with traditional knowledge, grounding their business values in cultural practice, while contributing to their communities, self-sustainability and economic growth that knows no bounds.

New learning and growth set me up to continue on my path to keep striving forward with my love for food, and community!

– Dani Thunder, In Common Restaurant

It has been so lovely to have such great support from the Elders in the program; Sacred Colours is getting a brand new website! I'm forever grateful!

- Cynthia Nault, Sacred Colours



The tools, presentations by industry experts, and networking opportunities have been extremely beneficial.

- Denise Atkinson, Tea Horse Ltd.

It has been a gift to both my entrepreneurial aspirations and to me as a whole to be a part of something that is moving in the same direction as I aspire to grow.

–Karen Marano, Indigenous Trauma Solutions



The benefit of getting funding was really a great motivator. The workshops that were provided were very helpful.

Rollie Allaire, Holistic Life & Wellness Coach

PARO walks with you through the process and gives you access to a network designed to assist you in achieving success in your personal business goals.

- Larissa Mikkelsen, LBS Environmental Consulting Inc.



The BizCamp impacted my life and my business in a positive way. The emotional and professional support was there for me when I

needed it the most.

- Joan Tangie, Cleaning By Tangeeze

As a result of attending BIZCamp, my business is growing and will provide for my family. I have a new network of Indigenous Women Entrepreneurs that I can count on and will remain connected to.

-Kathleen Sawdo, Sister Bear Designs

The Bannock Lady will be officially opening at Intercity Shopping Centre, one of the busiest malls in Thunder Bay.

- Jeanette Posine, The Bannock Lady

The Mo'okam She Rises program has not only been a great educational experience but has brought a new spiritual aspect to how I deal with business.

-Cheryl St. James, Makwa Security





MEAN HE DREA

By Sarah B. Hood

Life partners Cecil Sveinson and Melissa Brown work synergistically to support women and families in their communities

66 Cecil Sveinson and his partner Melissa Brown have dedicated much of their lives to efforts that champion women and families

hey say the whole is often greater than the sum of its parts, and Cecil Sveinson and Melissa Brown personify this familiar saying. Partners in life and in their life work, they complement and support one another in caring for families in their Winnipeg community and throughout Ontario.

Sveinson, a manager of Indigenous relations for the City of Winnipeg, and Brown, a consultant on Indigenous maternal and child health, have embraced a lifetime of work that in one way or another has supported and nurtured their communities. High on their list of priorities have been efforts that champion women and families.

Sveinson, an Anishinaabe from Poplar River First Nation, spent 25 years with the Winnipeg Police Service, retiring as a sergeant in 2017. His tenure there included working as an instructor at the Canadian Police College and the Winnipeg Police Academy, program manager with the Aboriginal and Diversity Policing Section, and special advisor to Winnipeg's Chief of Police on Indigenous issues and relations.

Following his retirement from the force, Sveinson worked as director of prevention and cultural therapy for Southeast Child and Family Services (CFS), where he developed culturally appropriate therapeutic programming for children in the agency's care. Alongside this, he spearheaded numerous communityoriented initiatives, including the Nipi Manitou (Water Spirit) Young Women's Group. He's also worked as an instructor, offering cross-cultural education with an Indigenous focus to help people understand the scope of colonization for Canada's Indigenous people, as well as instructing on topics relevant to women like non-violent crisis intervention and domestic violence safety plans and prevention.

For these and other efforts, Sveinson was recognized with the Aboriginal Circle of Educators' Cultural Educator of the Year Award and Dimension Magazine's Indigenous Advocate of the Year award.

Brown is a consultant, trainer and mentor with a focus on Indigenous maternal child health, healthy sexuality and reproductive justice. An Anishinaabe from Sagkeeng First Nation and Dine (Navajo) from Chinle, Arizona on the Navajo Nation, she originally trained as a massage therapist and worked in the field for about 10 years before becoming a certified doula and, in 2014, a Registered Midwife with a Bachelor of Midwifery from University College of the North.

She was also the founding project leader for the Manitoba Indigenous Doula Initiative, which was designed to help pregnant Indigenous women connect with traditional beliefs and ceremonies. Brown also founded Zaagi'idiwin Full Spectrum

Indigenous Doula Training, which she describes as "a grassroots organization that strives to return traditional knowledge around pregnancy, birth, postpartum, breastfeeding and parenting to Indigenous families."

STRONGER, TOGETHER

Sveinson and Brown met in ceremony about 10 years ago, when Sveinson was still with the Police Service and Brown was running her massage therapy practice. "We started out as good friends, then we ended up together," says Brown simply.

Their union was one not only of like-minds coming together - they also shared a high level of energy that pushed them to go above and beyond their daily work in helping those around them. Most importantly, the two had similar core beliefs, especially those revolving around family and healing. This drew them together and fuelled their





future career paths. "Both of us, at our core, follow the same teachings, and we believe in the healing model of individual, family, community and nation," says Sveinson. "And we continue to do work on ourselves. We're committed to doing the work on our family, with ourselves and our kids and now grandkids, and now we feel blessed and we want to work on our community."

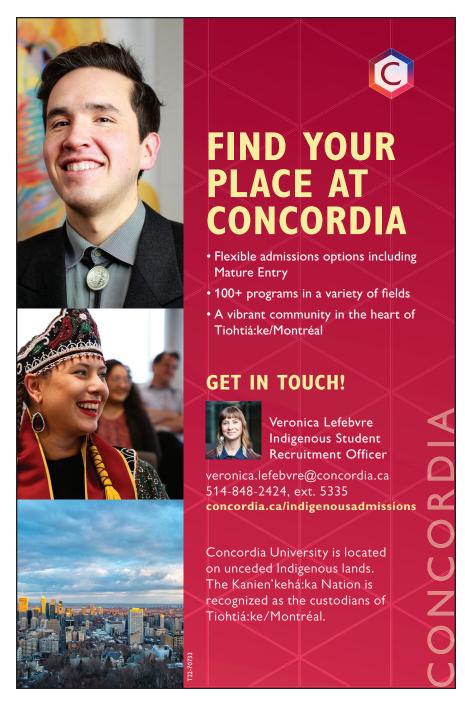
For Brown, much of their work has been in ceremony - both are sweat lodge conductors - which in turn has influenced their professional decision-making. "That's where our real work is," she says. "It's easy for the

things we've learned in ceremony to also be a part of our professional lives. It just became natural for us to do work together and to provide our own personal perspective in the work that we do. It's very natural for me to ask Cecil to share teachings about supporting young men being a father, how to be a good relative to people in our community; it just seemed like a natural progression."

For Sveinson, prioritizing women has been key and this was particularly woven into his work at Southeast CFS. "Indigenous women need to be prioritized, because they started their healing journey decades ago,"

he explains. "They hold up our nations. Behind every good male leader there is a host of Indigenous women who are getting things done for them. As we're evolving and learning more as a society, the work with men [also] needs to be done. We need to do our own healing work and shed ourselves of this toxic masculinity that was passed on to us through colonization."

Similarly, Indigenous communities need to work on building inclusivity - not just for women but also for their Two-Spirit members. Here too, Sveinson has been proactive. Notes Brown: "Something that I





really admire about Cecil: not only does he do his best to create a space for our women and Elders, but also for our Two-Spirit relatives. It's just something that comes naturally to him in thinking about our relatives and families that might otherwise feel excluded. Cecil does a really good job of recognizing that there's room for everybody in the circle. If they feel like they're comfortable, that's what's most important."

Brown references a resurgence in connecting with historic cultural traditions that is helping Indigenous women reconnect with their inner strength and power. "What

we've been seeing across Turtle Island across the last five years or so is this resurgence in connecting to traditional knowledge: both postpartum and parenting, but also this movement in body sovereignty and recognizing that it's important for us to learn about how our bodies work. It's a really beautiful movement," she says. "This movement has been empowering to individuals, whether they choose to have babies or not. It's this recognition that our bodies are sacred and we're sacred. Indigenous women are strong and beautiful, and they know what's best for them."

The story doesn't end with women, however. Sveinson stresses that Indigenous men also need to get involved in this emerging wave of female empowerment. "It's work that needs to be done, and we need men," he emphasizes. "As Indigenous men, we need to look out for our female relatives, our Two-Spirit relatives, the children and our Elders. Indigenous men need to do what is necessary to shed themselves of toxic masculinity, to decolonize and to become healthy relatives. It's all very simple: just be a good relative to all of creation."



'The contribution and sacrifices that have been made by our Indigenous women on behalf of our families, our communities and our organizations is commendable and should be praised today and every day. They sacrifice so much with no recognition and yet they continue with the fight and the struggles. On behalf of the ALFDC, our heartfelt appreciation goes out to each and every one.

Thank you for being there."



Steve Williams, Chairperson Aboriginal Labour Force Development Circle

Being of Iroquois descent, Steve Williams has the utmost respect for women and encourages them to pursue whatever dream that they may have.



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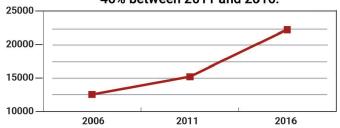
INDIGENOUS WOMEN ARE THRIVING IN BUSINESS



of Indigenous people who are self-employed are women.

(Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Population Profile, 2016 Census)

Indigenous women entrepreneurship grew by 46% between 2011 and 2016.



(Source: Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Population Profile, 2016 Census)

On average, Indigenous businesses owned by women create more jobs than those owned by men.

(Source: NACCA, Businesses Supported by Aboriginal Economic Programs in 2019-2020) **78%**

of Indigenous women start their businesses using personal savings.

(Source: National Indigenous Women Entrepreneurship Survey, NACCA, 2020)



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contributes to innovation, job creation, and economic growth.



95% of all Indigenous businesses pay back their loans, and the rate for women entrepreneurs is even higher.

(Source: NACCA, Annual Report 2018/19-2019/20)



INDIGENOUS WOMEN ARE BUILDING SUCCESS FOR THEMSELVES, THEIR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

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Three men who have helped empower Indigenous women through their work in the legal, academic and political arenas

oseph Morrison, Dennis McPherson and the Hon. Murray Sinclair: these men have all helped change the game for Indigenous women in Canada. Distinct as their careers have been - in law, academia and politics - the men share a belief in listening more than preaching, helping Indigenous families connect with traditional teachings and, above all, fostering respect for women and children.

Together, their stories show how much progress has been made over the past few decades and paint a signal of hope for the next generation.

THE HON. MURRAY SINCLAIR

"The greatest source of love and understanding and nurturing that we could turn to was our grandmothers and the grandmothers of our children"

Lawyer, mediator and retired senator, the Hon. Murray Sinclair is Ojibway Anishinaabe and a member of the Peguis First Nation in Manitoba. As a child, he was given the Ojibway name Mizhana Gheezhik, which he says means Pictures in the Sky. It is related to the story of a young man who set out to help his people at a time of crisis, and who eventually learned that he could advise them by communicating with the Creator through watching the sky.

"I've held that name all of my life and I didn't understand it for most of my life until my children were born," says Sinclair. "I was challenged to try to figure out how to help them become better Anishinaabe. I came to understand it from that point forward, with each request that was made of me, that it was not to seek out the work of telling people what to do, but they would ask me, and that's the way it's always been."

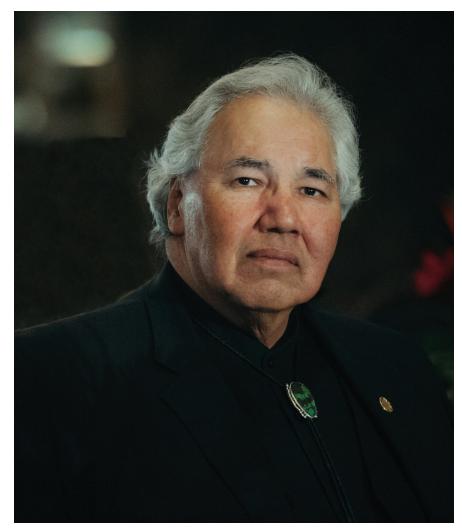
Certainly, Sinclair has been approached often to help his community. He was the first Aboriginal judge appointed in Manitoba but is best known nationally as the chair of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which published its findings in 2015. The TRC report's Call to Action #41 called for a public inquiry into "the causes of, and remedies for, the disproportionate victimization of Aboriginal women and girls."

"We felt that that was an issue of crisis that needed to be addressed immediately," Sinclair says. The TRC report also flags the victimization of young women in the residential schools. "We wrote that women were doubly victimized: by being taken away from their families, but then being subjected to a different kind of victimization than the boys were."

Sinclair explains that "our primary focus in the Calls to Action was to encourage Indigenous communities to move towards the utilization of their traditional teachings in their everyday life. What we said needed to be done was to move towards a process of reconciliation, in that we move to a place of mutual respect and move towards ensuring that Indigenous people gain a sense of self-respect. This will only happen when Indigenous people gain a sense of their own validity."

Indigenous leadership, notes Sinclair, is still predominantly male, and the TRC report urged that "those Indigenous communities that have relied upon matriarchal principles of governance should be allowed to do so." In addition, he says, "I have always advocated that women who are looking for Elders to instruct them should always go to female Elders, because I have this inherent belief that the female Elders not only have the benefit of the teachings, but they also have the wisdom of life as women [with] their unique perspective on these teachings and will allow these younger women to learn appropriately."

Less recognized than Sinclair's work with the TRC is a more intimate project that grew out of his personal family experience. It was based on his understanding, developed over the years through speaking with Elders, that one of the most important elements of childrearing was that "little children, when they are born, are left in the care of the women of the tribe, and so it is the mothers and the



The Hon. Murray Sinclair was chair of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which flagged the victimization of young women in residential schools and called for a public inquiry into the disproportionate victimization of Aboriginal women



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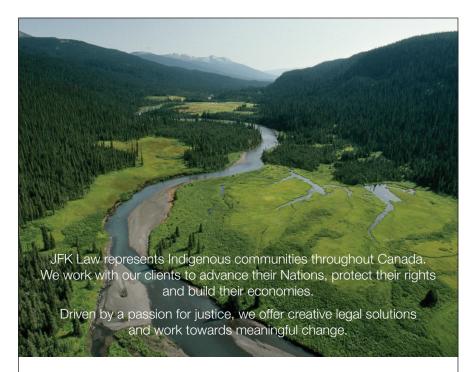




The female Elders not only have the benefit of the teachings, but they also have the wisdom of life as women [with] their unique perspective on these teachings



The Hon. Murray Sinclair



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grandmothers and the older sisters and the aunties who are responsible for the early growth of those children."

This early matriarchal experience, says Sinclair, imbues each child with respect for the women in their community, "to have that unique relationship with them, but also to know that they have that responsibility to return that love."

Therefore, when Sinclair's youngest child was born, he helped spearhead an Ojibway children's learning centre called The Children will be Loved and Respected. "We came to see that the greatest source of love and understanding and nurturing that we could turn to was our grandmothers and the grandmothers of our children, so we turned to my mother-in-law, and initially we brought her into the household every day to speak to [our child] in the language," he says.

The initiative expanded to other households, eventually reaching about 40 children, at which point it moved from the living room to an empty school. "Then we ensured that the mothers were included, and the older sisters and aunties and any other women who wanted to participate and also learn the language," he says. "We had almost lost our language, and we wanted the children to be the protectors of our language."

Sinclair says he believes that traditional teachings hold the key to a better future for Indigenous communities. "If they learn to live in accordance with those teachings, even in this modern world, they will have a much better life," he says. "It really is about ensuring that they have an opportunity to gain their self-respect and their validity."

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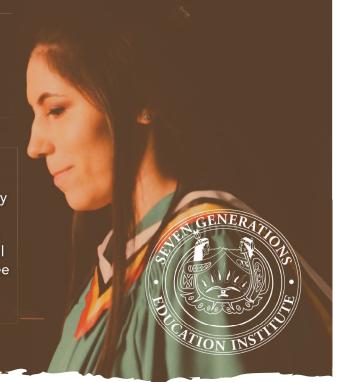
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DENNIS MCPHERSON

"I see hope as coming through the women in the community, and hopefully at the end of the day that the men will wake up to it all"

An Ojibwa and a band member of the Couchiching First Nation at Fort Frances, Dennis McPherson holds numerous academic credentials, including bachelorlevel arts, social work and philosophy degrees and a Master of Laws. He serves as an associate professor in the Department of Indigenous Learning at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

McPherson's relationship with the university has not always been easy. In 1995, he camped out on campus day and night for a month to protest a Senate decision to pay him out of funds from the Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy, which he considered to be a misappropriation of the money.

As the first full-time chair of his department, McPherson has been instrumental in developing the department and Lakehead University's master's program in Native Philosophy. "I was lucky enough to get a position as the first faculty member in what was then Native Studies," he says. "Being Native, I didn't want to be studied anymore; I changed the name to Indigenous Learning."



McPherson created a course that is now called Indigenous Canadian Worldviews because "we have a view here in Canada that is unique to the rest of the world," he says. "I've had women come into my course and make a statement that 'I had to come to university to find out what being an Aboriginal woman was all about.' I would say that's pretty fundamental. I'm not telling them who they are; I'm giving them the tools to think about it for themselves."

Any pioneering program like this has an inherent challenge in that it will initially attract people who are not yet academically trained, McPherson says. "This is the problem with our department: we're going to get older people who aren't qualified to be in university; [however] if we bring them in, we will see their kids and grandchildren come, and that's what we're seeing today. To me, that's the joy of it all."

"It's indicative that the inclusion of Native people in post-secondary institutions from the '80s into the '90s shows quite a significant rise," continues McPherson, "You would think if more Indians were being educated, it would have an impact on First Nations communities. However, the welfare rates on reserves were climbing as fast or faster [in those decades]. I think there's an explanation for that." (The reference to Indians is as per the status of Indians in the Indian Act; the Indian Act continues to be the primary document that Indigenous peoples in Canada live by.)

McPherson points to Bill C-31, which changed the Indian Act in 1985 to allow Indigenous women who married non-Indigenous men to maintain their status and allowed women who had already lost their status to apply for reinstatement. "Reinstatement allowed for women who had been disenfranchised by marriage to be reinstated as Indians - and not just them, but their kids," McPherson says. "They were no longer by law allowed to go back to their home communities, so where did they go? Thunder Bay, Toronto. They had kids, and those kids were raised in 'urbania,' so [they] had access to education - primary, high school - but their parents did not have access to employment in high-paying jobs."

It wasn't until these families were able to take advantage of funding for higher education that enrolment began to rise, and it has been rising with each successive generation. McPherson describes "an influx into post-secondary" today that is partly made up of the grandchildren and even greatgrandchildren of the Indigenous generation that first arrived in universities after 1985.

"At the end of the day, what I've always said is I'm not after vengeance or revenge, I just want my kids to have equal opportunities like all other kids. The key to all of this is education. But at the end of that line, we have to take responsibility for our own kids, because if we don't place our own kids first and foremost, I have to ask what the hell does the rest of it even matter?" he says.

"I see hope as coming through the women in the community," sums up McPherson, "and hopefully at the end of the day that the men will wake up to it all and take responsibility for who they are."



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Dennis McPherson at a friend's birthday celebration with a few graduates of the Indigenous Canadian Worldviews course that he teaches



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JOSEPH MORRISON

"To respect women is the best way to support women, to stand behind them"

"Think about what you are going to do and what the results may be before you do it. Think of the future.... People need to set examples and accept one another." These words from Joseph Morrison, quoted in the book Celebration of Anishinaabe Achievers of the Treaty 3 Nation (2000), sum up much of his life's work, says Morrison's wife Mary Alice Smith. Morrison, who died in 2012, was a member of the Anishinaabeg of Naongashiing and a long-time resident of Kenora, Ontario. His Anishinaabe name was Pagwaakiinen.

Morrison dedicated his life to his community, serving in the Canadian Armed Forces as a young man, then returning to civilian life as a strong supporter of the Friendship Centre movement. He is probably most widely remembered for his 1989 decision to be sworn in as an Ontario Justice of Peace not with a Bible, but with an eagle feather.

Morrison was involved in a very wide range of Indigenous community institutions around Kenora, including the Ne-Chee Friendship Centre and the Kenora Street Patrol. He served as executive director of Friendship Centres in Kenora and Fort Frances, as vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC), and as OFIFC representative to the National Association of Friendship Centres. He was also a member of the National Aboriginal Advisory Committee, the Board of Directors of the Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services corporation and the Elders council for the Northern Ontario School of Medicine.



The late Joseph Morrison with his wife Mary Alice Smith. Morrison was the founder of Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin, which engages men to take action to end violence against Indigenous women

"He and his father, his mother and a number of other leading Elders here formed the Lake of the Woods Drum and Powwow Club in the early-mid '70s. He sat at the drum from his mid-30s until the time he passed away," says Smith, who has herself been active both with ONWA and the Friendship Centre movement for several decades.

"In the early years, I think a lot of his focus was on men dealing with addictions. He was an only child - his father went off to the war, he was wounded there and then came home. Joe was only about three. There were a couple of decades when his dad was drinking a lot. His mother got into drinking a bit herself and that really affected him:

both about being sober [himself], but also about speaking out and being an example," she says.

"He never lectured people, and it was his example of how to treat women. He always said that respect - in big capital letters - was the big word for him, how you have to have respect for yourself before you can respect other people," adds Smith. "He was sharing what he learned from his parents, who sobered up and started helping people."

For Morrison, she says, the biggest concern "would have been violence against women. It was something he felt very strongly about and spoke to often. At the Friendship Centre, he was always focusing on behaving respectfully. He had a dress code, always; you could not come into work with jeans on. He had his idea that if you were going to go out into the community, that was a sign of respect, and he did the same thing when he was in court. He had high standards, even about lawyers."

After his retirement from the bench in 2006, Morrison was a founder of the Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin program (I am a Kind Man), which engages men to take action to end violence against Indigenous women. Following his death in 2012, the Joseph Morrison Legacy Fund was established to provide an annual bursary to Aboriginal students in Ontario who have overcome adversity to achieve their goals.

Despite these admirable achievements, "I always think of his legacy as being much closer to home," says Smith. "There are six daughters altogether and three sons who now of course also have their own families, and I can't even count how many godchildren and great-grandchildren. They all saw him as someone who showed them how to behave, how to treat others, and that's how they are, all of them. They're very thoughtful about how they behave."

If Morrison were here today, "he'd say to respect women is the best way to support women, to stand behind them," Smith says. "Even when he was 65, he was still learning, and I know that his attitude and his behaviour with women changed over time. He became more respectful; he became more careful. Especially over the last 20 years that he was alive, I could tell he was so much more careful about what he said around women, so he was always learning and reflecting and open to changing - he didn't think he had all the answers, but he always tried to be a part of the solution, which in itself, was his legacy for [others] to follow."



Joseph Morrison and Mary Alice Smith's blended family now includes more than 60 grandchildren and greatgrandchildren. Some are pictured here at a recent family spring feast for the drum

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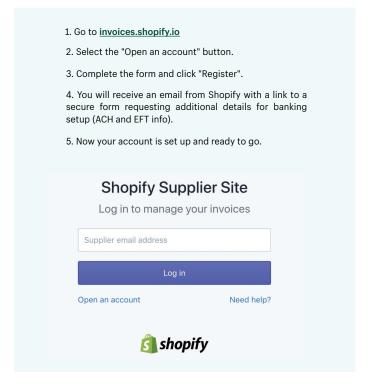
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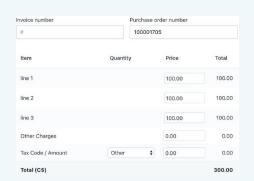


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<d $^{\circ}$ HOPE AND MARKET















Wachay, Bonjour and Hello,

My name is Hope Koosees. I am an Indigenous Student Recruiter and Pathways Navigator at Northern College. I am Ojibway and Cree heritage which is commonly known as Oji-Cree. I affiliate with Attawapiskat First Nation.

I grew up in Moosonee, Ontario where I graduated from Northern Lights Secondary School. I am also a graduate of Northern College where I've graduated with my post-secondary diploma in the Police Foundations program.

I was 15 years old when Northern College was introduced to me through a Youth Leadership Camp, known as Lightening Trail. With this initiative, I took a Northern College tour and had a chance to explore the campuses of Northern College and their programs.

As I was in my final year of high school, I made the decision that Northern College was where I wanted to be. I had a lot of support from the faculty, support staff and my coordinator in making my decision. I was known by my first and last name, which made it more personable.

I wasn't just a student number. I mattered.

When I first arrived at College to study, I was enrolled in the Nursing (BScN) program but then realized after a week that it wasn't for me. I knew there were other ways to help people. Then the Police Foundations program was introduced to me and I gave it a try.

Two years later, here I am helping other students do the same!

To come from a small knitted First Nation community, I really liked the idea of smaller class sizes here at Northern College which means more one-on-one support, personalized support for each learner. For someone like me, I was already used to smaller class sizes in my high school in the North, which made my experience at College a lot easier.

With their high quality programming and caring environment, Northern College really helped me gain the skills I needed and I was employed a month after graduation.

Now, I work for the very institution that supported me in getting a College education. It feels good to be back in a new role one where I'm pleased to help others with their educational goals, and find ways to make those dreams come true.

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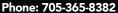
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Hope

To learn more connect, with Hope Koosees, Indigenous Recruiter and Pathways Navigator, Northern College Email: kooseesh@northern.on.ca





HOPE IN THE DARKIESS

By Ashley Alber

A retired Indigenous police officer launches a cross-country walk to open the conversation on Indigenous youth and mental health

even years ago, Kevin
Redsky lost his niece to
suicide. She was a ward of
the child welfare system in
Winnipeg, and her death
took an incredible toll on him and his
family. There was a lot of guilt and they felt
they could have done more to help her.

In 2018, Redsky harnessed this feeling of loss and turned it into an incredible story of hope. He launched a cross-country walk to

raise awareness about mental health challenges faced by Indigenous youth. A retired police officer, Redsky also reached out to his fellow police officers to actively participate in the walk so the two groups could learn from each other.

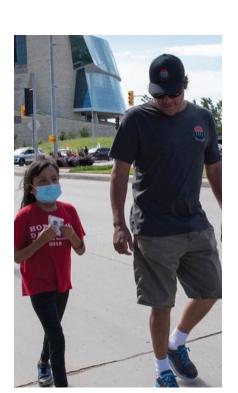
During his work as a police officer, Redsky dealt with an overwhelming number of calls regarding youth struggling with mental health. Police officers were always the first to attend a crisis situation, which meant spending numerous hours talking with youth. Redsky saw the same struggles in different parts of Ontario and felt that not enough was being done to address the mental health needs of youth. "Both personally and professionally, youth mental health hits close to home for me and so many other people. It was important for us to start talking and to continue to keep talking," Redsky says.



Redsky recalls a conversation he had early on during the walk in 2018. An Indigenous youth told him the only time young Indigenous people see police is when they are at their house to arrest their parents or apprehend them. Redsky feels it is important to change that perception and develop closer relations. Youth need to have a feeling of safety, and trusting police is an important part of that.

It was these personal and professional experiences that led Redsky to launch Hope in the Darkness Walk for Youth Mental Health in 2018. The first walk began on April 1, with one group of walkers starting in Cape Spear, Newfoundland, the easternmost point of Canada, and another in Haida Gwaii, B.C., the westernmost point of Canada. The two groups met up in Winnipeg on August 3, completing their walk at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. It was an amazing finale and participants felt they had accomplished what they set out to do.

Today, the Hope in the Darkness National Walk for Youth Mental Health has turned into a regular event with hundreds of police officers and Indigenous youth taking the time to complete the country-wide trek, or at least participate in part of it.



It was the tragic loss of a niece to suicide that spurred on Redsky to do what he could to help Indigenous youth



Redsky's efforts have drawn the attention of Indigenous communities and local police forces who participate at different stages of the cross-country walk





Kevin Redsky, a former police officer, has succeeded not only in raising awareness for youth mental health but in bridging the gap between the Indigenous and law enforcement communities



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The name Redsky chose for his uplifting initiative, Hope in the Darkness, was inspired by the song The Ghosts That We Knew by Mumford & Sons, who have allowed organizers to use it as their anthem. "The lyric just hit home for me, and it was so appropriate. We used it and it launched our campaign," explains Redsky, who is from the Shoal Lake #40 First Nation in the Treaty 3 area west of Kenora.

The logo is comprised of four sticks of matches, with each match representing an issue impacting First Nation communities. The second match represents Indigenous women. On one of the walks, it was lit in Haida Gwaii, the starting point in B.C., and walkers spent four days on the Highway of Tears to honour and pay respect to their fallen sisters, children, aunties, and grandmothers.

Redsky understands that Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls is a profound and deeply upsetting issue for First Nations people. He wants to acknowledge that and keep that conversation going. He also wants Indigenous women to see that Indigenous men can actively support and help them. "It is important for our young ladies to know that our men are

watching out for them. There was a need to emphasize that, and I feel like we did an unbelievable job with that," says Redsky.

The goal of the walk remains the same: engaging youth, getting them to "walk the talk" of doing something, and having open discussions about mental health. It continues to engage police officers across the country, to challenge them to stand up for youth mental health, and to give youth a platform and a voice.

Many police officers have stepped up to the plate and participated, either by walking, escorting the walkers, or throwing their own community events. Redsky has been overwhelmed with their support, and stresses that it is important to have a common goal. He also notes that police officers have their own ongoing struggles to deal with, including high suicide rates.

With the walk, Redsky continues to create awareness that not enough is being done in the area of youth mental health, and to challenge communities and organizations to do a better job. While he commends mental health workers and all they do, he knows they are overworked and short on resources. Ultimately, more resources are needed for mental health initiatives.

Redsky appreciates the fact that people are now normalizing the conversation and feel free to talk, but he stresses that further action is needed. Communities continue to struggle with issues tied to drugs and mental health.

"It is so important, not only for our young Indigenous women and girls, but young men as well," he says. "Mental health is a serious issue right now and we just need to address it and keep talking and find some solutions."





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MAKING MEDICINE, HEALING HEARTS

Indigenous Women's Feminism









s I write this article, my heart is heavy with the "uncovery" of buried babies and children at former residential school sites throughout Canada. This trauma is lived and continues to be experienced by all the survivors, and the children of survivors. They are our mothers and grandmothers, fathers and uncles. That is the context of this moment and that is how close to this we all are.

The stories of babies and children being there one day and gone the next has been told to us by survivors. It is the uncovering of these buried children in mass and unmarked graves that is now Canada's truth. For survivors, their truth is now validated. It is the voice of these children that tell us the time for change is now, and it will take all of us together

to make things right. Canada's guilt is not enough for change; real change will be collective and meaningful action. In knowing the truth, we can no longer look the other way; it is in knowing that we have the power to make change.

Deconstructing systems, behaviours and ways of being is difficult work. We, as a people, have picked up some unhealthy worldviews. How could we not, considering the assimilation practices that resulted in residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and patriarchy in general. As humans, when we are hurt, we can become what has hurt us, and in turn hurt others. It takes self-determination to look inwards and see who we have become, and further introspection to recognize this truth and make change.

The reality is that we can reconstruct ourselves, systems, and ways of being to be what we need them to be. We can relearn and reclaim ways of knowing and being that will guide us through difficult times. In doing so, we can work together to restore Indigenous women's leadership practices to what they once were. We can relearn and reclaim ways of knowing and being that will guide us through difficult times. It is never about one or the other; it is about never leaving anyone out or behind. If we go, we go together. If we heal, we heal together. Our medicine is in the gathering, in the cleaning and preparing. WE make the medicine for ourselves, our families, and our communities. If we

are not well, our families and communities cannot survive. Indigenous women are the backbone of our nations. WE are the experts in our lives, and we do know what is best for us.

For ONWA, Indigenous feminism is about making room at the table, and making space in our hearts and work for those that need us. It is about not speaking over the other, knowing that this world is big enough for all of us. Indigenous feminism is about using our collective voice to make change for Indigenous women, families, and communities. It is about taking the reality of our lives and experiences and knowing we are never far enough away from running the risk of going missing or being murdered. It is about us showing up and being able to speak to Indigenous women's issues and not have them spoken to us by non-Indigenous female or male voices.



Knowledge Keepers Al Hunter (left) and Katherine Everson (right) share their wisdom

Indigenous women's feminism is about making sure that our children's children know who they are and where they come from. It is the responsibility to serve those we love with the best of what we have. It is caring for our mothers and grandmothers while we raise and feed our children and grandchildren. Indigenous women's feminism is waking up as a small girl child knowing you are never safe but being brave enough to make your way through. It is about being heard and seen. Indigenous women's feminism is knowing you are in the circle, and that your circle is made up of family, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters who protect you and you protect them. Our feminism is not about just being female, it is about being the one who holds the world together, Mindemooyenh, it is who we are, and it is how we do feminism.

The fight for equality, for equity, has been a long one. I wonder when we will get there. I do know that we as a people, as a nation, as a country are not there yet. I think of the people who have done this work and continue to do the work to make change in whatever way they can and am honoured to know them or have worked with them at some point. The work of ONWA has not been done in isolation; it has never been done by us alone. WE are grateful for our allies, our champions, the many who came before us and showed us the way. Without them we would not be where we are today, and we would not be preparing the way for those yet to come. Making medicine is Indigenous women's feminism and our feminism is healing hearts. We do this work together to make our circle strong, for ourselves, our families, and our communities.

Maricel Ramos is the founder of Wealth Practitioners, an independent financial planning practice with headquarters located in Ontario. We create financial plans, which include retirement, cash flow/tax planning, investment, insurance and estate planning. Working with Indigenous groups across Canada through financial stewardship, in accordance with trust agreements. Partnered with investment portfolio managers to align with community values and investment risk tolerance for short term and long-term financial goals.

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With its mandate to support First Nations seeking to develop or enhance their Financial Management Systems, the First Nations Financial Management Board (FMB) often witnesses the positive impacts of strong female leadership on community development.



The FMB would like to acknowledge Sandra Linklater, Loretta Stager and Geraldine Bear who have all demonstrated strong leadership in developing and implementing a Financial Administration Law (FAL) for their respective communities.



The FMB has a vast number of resources, tools & templates, and experts to support First Nations. All of our services are offered at no cost.



Working with FMB and seeking FMS certification provides several benefits, including:

- Increased transparency and accountability to members and future business partners
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- Increased stability and continuity through finance and governance practices
- Improved risk management

As of August 31, 2020, 42 First Nations across Canada have achieved FMS Certification. The FMB is actively working with approximately 200 First Nations who are seeking this milestone.

Learn how Financial Management System Certification can benefit your First Nation at FNFMB.com or contact us at mail@fnfmb.com



CONSEIL
DE GESTION
FINANCIÈRE des
Premières Nations



Centre of Excellence for Matrimonial Real Property (COEMRP)

SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Dear Members, Colleagues and Partners:

The Centre of Excellence for Matrimonial Real Property has successfully completed its mandate and will be closing operations effective March 31st, 2021.

Congratulations to the past and present staff of Centre of Excellence for Matrimonial Real Property for their outstanding commitment and dedication in carrying out the mandate.

Background in the establishment:

In 2013 the National Aboriginal Lands Managers Association (NALMA) responded to an Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) call for proposal for the establishment of a COEMRP.

The purpose of the Centre was to operate at arm's length from the Government of Canada, and provide services such as:

- Guiding First Nations who are opting to develop their own MRP laws
- Providing information on the protections and rights available to individuals and families living on reserve
- Assisting with implementing the provisional federal rules
- Providing research on alternative dispute resolution mechanisms

The NALMA proposal was reviewed by an Assessment Committee comprised of representatives from:

- ISC
- The Royal Canadian Mounted Police,
- · Status of Women Canada, and
- Public Safety Canada

The Assessment Committee provided a recommendation to the Minister of ISC.

Based on NALMA's extensive experience and connection to reserve land issues, on November 14th, 2013, Minster Bernard Valcourt officially announced NALMA as the host of the Centre of Excellence for Matrimonial Real Property.

This was a five-year Minster's commitment which was extended for an additional three years and will end March 31, 2021.

COEMRP Successes

The Centre has contributed greatly to supporting First Nations' law-making and rights and protections under the Family Homes on Reserves and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act (FHRMIRA).

Since inception, the Centre provided the following outstanding services:

- Developed 4 effective toolkits
- Provided training to 306 First Nations across Canada
- Supported 14 First Nations who have enacted their own law under FHRMIRA in the development and implementation of their MRP laws
- MRP Special Project Fund had 66 First Nations access funding for implementation activities of FHRMIRA
- National mail distribution to over 6,000 First Nations and partners
- Development of an interactive and resourceful COEMRP website
- Hosted 3 MRP national conferences
- Hosted 8 national engagement sessions
- Responded on average to 150 referrals annually
- Built an astonishing library of resources and tools

Moving forward with Matrimonial Real Property (MRP) Support

Effective April 1st, 2021, the Centre's support services will transition into NALMA operations and will be normalized into the NALMA mandate until March 31st, 2023.

The Centre's resources will remain on the COEMRP website until June 2021, thereafter they will be moved onto the NALMA website at www.nalma.ca.



- Coming in Fall 2021 IPHCC's Indigenous Cultural Safety Training.
- Online, asynchronous, interactive, and focused on bias, power and privilege.
- Courses will include videos, case studies and checkpoints to consolidate your learning.
- Cultural Safety 101 is an advanced course with a focus on cultural safety as a paradigm shift across mainstream healthcare.
- Modules will be empowering and build accountability and sustainability for cultural safety in day-to-day practice.
- Courses will reflect diverse needs and contexts across regions in Ontario, as cultural safety is a dynamic process.
- Courses for specific fields within health care, such as bioethics, organizational change for leadership, and mental health care and addictions will follow.
- Content has been developed in consultation and collaboration with a knowledge keepers circle, inclusive of FNIM across different intersections and lived experiences.
- For more information, please visit www.iphcc.ca



*Note: Cultural Competency Training and Palliative Care Training will be provided to you by third party organizations, but available to access on our learning management platforms.

Using their NATURAL GIFTS

By Nickita Longman

How Indigenous men working in creative fields dedicate their platforms to uplifting Indigenous women and girls

his year will mark the second anniversary of the publication of Redaining Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The report highlights 231 Calls for Justice directed to social service providers, government structures, education and health services and institutions for implementation.

While systemic change may take years to achieve, many have long begun the work of healing and nurturing their relationships with the Indigenous women in their own communities. Although honouring the matriarchs in Indigenous communities is everyone's work, there are a number of talented men working in the creative field who are making their own personal mark on this important, ongoing effort.

She is Wise discussed some of the ways in which men working in traditional healing and wellness, arts and culture, as well as the film and music industries, are using their unique platforms to support women both personally and professionally. Whether through education awareness, activism, poetry, or traditional healing and storytelling, there are many ways in which men are using their gifts to uplift Indigenous women in the work that they do.



Theland Kicknosway, a young Cree/Potawatomi hoop dancer, started his own annual run to raise awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

RUNNING FOR OTHERS

Theland Kicknosway is a Cree and Potawatomi youth from Walpole Island First Nation who uses his voice to spread positive messages while showcasing his Indigenous culture and traditions proudly. Kicknosway is a talented traditional hoop dancer, as well as singer and drummer, who has performed across Canada and further afield - in Mexico, Switzerland and the U.S. In 2018, at the age of just 15, he was the recipient of an Indspire Award for Culture, Heritage and Spirituality - the youngest in the award's history.

Kicknosway's concern for women began at a young age. When he was just nine years old, he learned of the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls ongoing tragedy in Canada and felt a strong urge to do something to help. This eventually led to his starting a 134-km marathon when he reached his teens in order to raise awareness for the cause. "It didn't sit right with me," he says, "so I decided to run to the Kitigan Zibi First Nation and be an example for others by running 134 kilometres to bring awareness."

The run, from Kitigan Zibi to Gatineau Park just north of Ottawa, has turned into an annual marathon - Theland's Journey raising thousands of dollars for his charity of choice, Families of Sisters in Spirit. The group offers financial help and supplies to the caretakers of the children, and also organizes events such as free suppers. Theland's Journey has become a critical source of funding for the organization.

Kicknosway believes the opportunity is a positive and healing way to support families of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit (MMIWG2S) people and highlight the issue by continuing to speak the names of those the communities have lost. He remains committed to his running journey to keep raising awareness on an annual basis. "Throughout my journey, and starting from a very young age, I was always taught to respect our matriarchs and our life-givers," he says, by way of explanation.

With an international platform, Kicknosway is able to spread this message to other boys and men around the world while trying to lead with a good mind. Inspiring him, he says, are the many women who have influenced his upbringing his entire life, starting with his mother. She raised him while instilling



As a talented hoop dancer with global reach, Kicknosway uses his voice to spread positive messages of healing across the world



Indigenous values in his upbringing and helping him maintain his profile and professional career. "At the root of everything is the support of my mother," he explains. "In one way, she is my 'mom-ager'; in other ways, she's just my mom. In both ways, I am grateful she has been there."

On top of his mother's influence, Kicknosway's aunties and grandmothers play an influential role in his life too. "While there are too many to name, they have all taught me many things that have made me into the young man that I am today," he says.

When asked what advice he would give to other young Indigenous artists looking to use their platform to support Indigenous women, Kicknosway says it begins by simply listening to them and learning from what they have to say. "One thing that I continue to learn is to always ask questions, and to be prepared to learn and change."

SUPPORTING A WATER WARRIOR

Stevie Salas is an Apache musician, writer and producer, as well as recipient of the 2009 Native American Lifetime Achievement Award. His illustrious career has included collaborations with such musical luminaries as Mick Jagger, Justin Timberlake, Public Enemy, TI and Rod Stewart. His music production also landed him a role working with American Idol and, later, producing in television and film. He hosted a show with APTN called Arbor Live! and, in 2017, released his first documentary called Rumble: The Indians Who Rocked the World.



Apache musician Stevie Salas produced a documentary on a young female Indigenous water activist to help give her story a platform



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Indigenous ways of knowing and being have guided and infused StreetARToronto's (StART's) approach to putting community at the heart of the public art-making process. StART is honoured to showcase and celebrate here a sampling of the women-identified Indigenous artists whose vibrant and meaningful murals have empowered communities, created a sense of belonging and made Tkaronto a more equitable place for all. Learn more at www.toronto.ca/streetart.

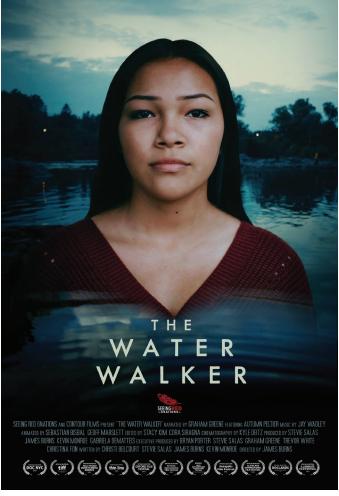




Above: Stevie Salas with delegates from ONWA at a Rumble presentation in Sydney, Australia at the Healing Our Spirit Worldwide conference. Below: His documentary *The Water Walker* tells the inspiring story of Autumn Peltier, a committed campaigner for water protection who has addressed the UN on the topic







66 The Water Walker is not a story of Indigenous victims, but rather it is a story about an Indigenous hero.... I search for the positive with the goal of leaving the audience with hope 55

Stevie Salas

Growing up around water as an avid surfer, Salas' activism led him to advocate for clean drinking water for Indigenous communities. While working in Six Nations installing clean water and filtration systems with the Dreamcatcher Charitable Foundation, he learned about water protector and activist Autumn Peltier, a young Indigenous woman who started advocating for water protection and clean drinking water when she was just eight years old. Salas immediately knew he wanted to give her story a platform. "I am always searching for unique stories and people," he says.

The two met, and shortly after, Salas pitched the young Indigenous woman's remarkable story as a documentary idea to director James Burns. In September of 2020, The Water Walker was released, with Salas as executive producer.

The film documents Peltier's journey from Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory as she heads to New York City to address the United Nations to advocate for the land and water. "The Water Walker is not a story of Indigenous victims, but rather it is a story about an Indigenous hero," Salas says. "My goal is to not complain and make the audience feel guilty. I search for the positive with the goal of leaving the audience with hope."

Salas remains committed to truth-telling and believes that this is what has helped his relationships with the women he has known in his life. "When I am working, I know that both men and women are strong," he says. "But I always remember that the wisdom of a woman is beyond comparison and something that I respect very much."

The multi-talented artist believes that "if there is a God, she is a woman." As for advice for other men looking to lift up the voices of women, Salas warns to never underestimate the power of a woman.



OUR MEDICINES~ONÓNHKWA

On my journey of self healing and growth, I have found a passion in creating jewellery pieces using resin and the four sacred medicines: tobacco, sage, cedar and sweetgrass, as well as others.

My hope is that all who acquire a piece of my jewellery will find comfort in the spiritual properties of the medicines while on their own journeys. It is an honour to share the medicines from Mother Earth as it is for all of us to benefit from, and to honour her gifts.

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OurMedicines~Onónhkwa









Poet, activist, healer and environmentalist Al Hunter uses his many talents to help women through organizations like ONWA, Aboriginal Shelters of Ontario and Family Information Liaison Units



Al Hunter is Anishinaabe, Mashkawegaabo, Atik n'doodem, from the Caribou Clan and the Rainy River First Nation. He is a professional trauma-informed cultural practice and support worker, as well as poet, activist, healer and environmentalist. His work often centres around mental and cultural wellness - something he refers to as his calling. "I wouldn't call it a career," he says, "but I am driven to listen, observe and dream."

Hunter cites his involvement with ONWA as a grounding force that changed his life in a positive way. "Being involved with ONWA for the past seven years has profoundly changed and influenced me for the better," he explains. "I am continuously influenced by the kindness and humility with which the women [of the organization] carry themselves. They sing, they cry, and they celebrate. It has taught me to be kinder."

A major component to uplifting women in our communities begins with listening to Indigenous women and supporting their needs, Hunter says. For him, that work might look like carrying water, splitting wood, or building community lodges for ceremony. Hunter applies his trauma-informed cultural practice, ceremony and healing into all the connections he builds. "We walk with one another for the water and for our children," he says. "I will continue to support in all the ways that I can."

Hunter's journey has taken him to many organizations with women at the front and centre of their work. "I am humbled by their leadership," he says. He has worked with organizations such as Aboriginal Shelters of Ontario, or Family Information Liaison Unit-Ontario, and has supported family and friends of MMIWG2S people.

"Women have always been my personal healers from my own trauma," Hunter says. Similarly, he believes other men must continue to use their gifts to also support women: "Turn your pain into a gift and use it to help others."

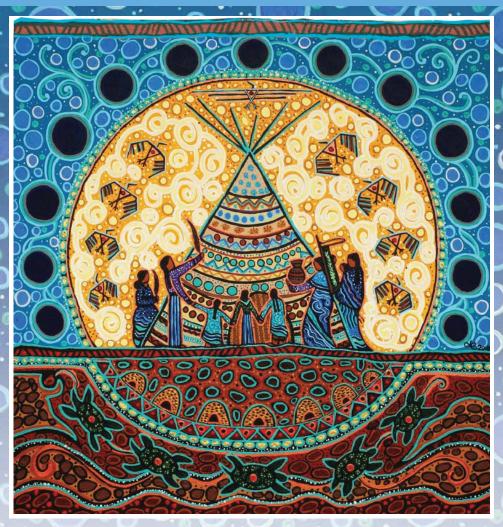




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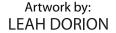






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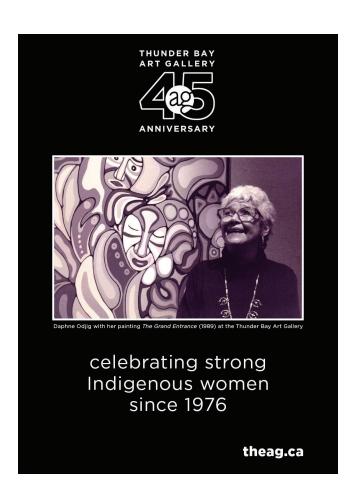
NATIONAL INDIGENOUS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Awarded annually to three Indigenous undergraduate students (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) studying full-time at Western's main campus.













grew up in the small northern Ontario town of Caramat. Indigenous identity was not something I really thought about while growing up but I did know that education was important to me. By the time I was in high school it was evident my drive stemmed from my desire to secure a 'good job' and to become an independent woman. I think there are two reasons I was so driven. The first was my mom; she is the most resilient, hardworking person and she sacrificed so much for my siblings and me. She was my role model and I've always wanted to make her proud. The second reason was I saw many family members struggle with addiction. Addiction took over their lives and I wanted a different story to tell.

Although I wanted a good job, I really doubted my ability to be successful in university. Following high school, I applied and was accepted into a fitness and health promotion program at a college in London, Ontario. Once there, I quickly realized London was too far from my family. I decided to move closer to home and enrolled into the

Native Nursing Entry Program (NNEP) at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay. I could not have known the impact this journey would have on my life and on my cultural identity.

The NNEP program offered the opportunity to enroll in university, but it also fostered my cultural journey. I felt welcomed and seen as an Indigenous woman for the first time in my life. I began learning about my culture, colonization, intergenerational trauma and identified the impact residential schools had on my own family. This lit a fire inside for me; a drive to continue to learn and grow, connect with my family and perhaps, one day, contribute to improving the health of Indigenous peoples.

Completing my Bachelor of Science in Nursing sparked a little more confidence in my capabilities and I decided to apply to the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM). To my disbelief, I was accepted into NOSM and started a roller coaster ride of medical school training in 2011. At the same time, I continued to discover myself, still lacking confidence but con-

tinuing to put one foot forward at a time. I eagerly engaged in learning opportunities I was passionate about, I trained in Attawapiskat, Summer Beaver, Fort Hope and Sioux Lookout. It was not until my second year of Family Medicine residency I realized Psychiatry was my true passion. The road should never be easy; I am grateful for my bumpy road and the hardships I overcame.

Today, after completing fourteen years of post-secondarv education and residency training, I will enter my last year of Psychiatry Residency and inspire to be a Staff Psychiatrist at Thunder Bay Regional Health Science Center. I plan to work in Thunder Bay and continue to improve access to mental health care in remote Indigenous communities. I may finally have that "good job" I been working towards for many years, but more meaningful, I have a career that I am passionate about, one which challenges me every single day, and the privilege to provide mental health care to my community. I can now fulfill my goal of providing and collaborating with Indigenous



communities to bring about change and a healthier tomorrow. If I could go back, I would tell myself (that shy, self-conscious young girl) to follow your passions, have confidence in yourself, work hard, and be damn proud of who you are!

Zoe Michano-Furlotte BScN, MD, Psychiatry Resident Northern Ontario School of Medicine



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MAKING CHANGE

Helping in Community, Leading the Way

Melvin Hardy, a former doula, embraces a fiercely female-friendly approach in his work as the newly elected Anishinabek Nation Regional Chief

Photo courtesy of Darci Everson

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hief Melvin Hardy of the Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek

(Rocky Bay) First Nation in MacDiarmid, near Lake Nipigon, has been around strong women all his life. He has learned a lot from them, and he has applied what he learned since he was elected Chief in 2016 to supporting the women of BZA as they take on greater leadership roles in the community. At the time of print, he was recently elected the Anishinabek Nation Regional Chief.

Growing up in a family of 11 children - seven boys and four girls - Hardy watched his mom take in children from other families when their parents went absent. And when his parents had to be away from the home for long periods (Hardy's father was Chief of Rocky Bay three times and his mother served on the band council) his sisters would take over managing the large family. He also tells of one of his aunts who, after giving birth early in the morning, was up and about a couple of hours later, cutting wood, lighting the fire and making lunch for the other children.

"Nobody challenged those women," Hardy recalls today. "Our grandmothers and moms had to be the doctors, they had to give prenatal and postnatal care, they were the caregivers - and not just for their own kids. I learned a lot from my mom, how she governed the household. She had a lot of say and my dad depended on her. It's influenced me a lot in my lifetime."

Hardy himself has built up a formidable body of experience and skills working with women over the years, including serving as a helper at ceremonies for women when he was young. It gave him a perspective not many men are privileged to have.

A formative event for him was his move to Toronto, where he lived for a dozen years. How it came about says a lot about his character and how he sees the world. In 2001, his wife wanted to be closer to her father and other family members in Toronto. Hardy was working on setting up a treatment centre in Kenora at the time, but he didn't hesitate. "I said I could get a job in Toronto, where she could get together



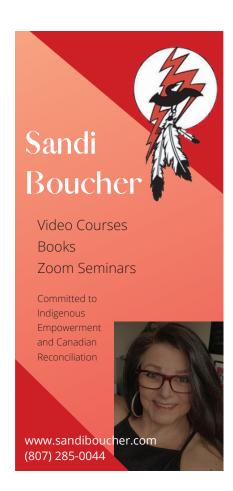
Chief Melvin Hardy actively pushes to involve more women in the running of his community. Of the six band council members, half are women

with her dad and sisters. I did it as much for my daughters as anyone, to help them understand the concept of family - because my wife's sisters had been adopted."

Hardy lived in Toronto until 2013, serving in progressively senior roles in various family and youth agencies, finishing as the head of Youth Services at Native Child and Family Services of Toronto. On the way, he amassed a unique set of experiences and training that are well out of the ordinary for men of any culture. A major turning point for him was a little more out of the ordinary than most, as he recalls.

"Before I became manager of the Ontario Early Years Centre, I was working in the program as a home visitor for children up to five years old. The centre had signed up for prenatal maternal support training - for being a doula, which is similar to a midwife. But the person who was assigned didn't show up at the last minute, and they decided to send me instead. I said, 'Why me?' They said, 'Never mind, get over there - we paid for a space and you're going to fill it.' That's how I wound up getting trained as a doula."

Today, Hardy remembers carrying his infant training doll on the Toronto subway as he commuted to work every day. He has





encountered his fair share of teasing over the years - including from other male Chiefs - about the unusual path he has taken. But this Canadian Armed Forces veteran has never turned away from a battle if it's for something he believes in.

In Toronto, Hardy also worked at a program called Nonoshi, where older women talked with young parents, offering support, advice and understanding. Most of the parents were single moms, but Hardy says fathers also came seeking support. "Initially some of the dads were resistant to having women give them oversight on what they should be doing for their children, especially single dads," Hardy says. "But the women took an auntie type role, a granny role, and the men were more comfortable because it reminded them of their own grannies."

Hardy moved back to BZA in 2013. By the time he was elected in 2016, he had a reputation as someone who respected women and understood their potential. "Even before I ran for Chief, I had to demonstrate that I follow a way that's very respectful towards women, towards helping women," he says.



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Much of Chief Hardy's work has involved supporting women, families and children: he trained as a doula, managed the Ontario Early Years Centre, advocated for the Ontario Family Well-Being Program and spearheaded the establishment of Rocky Bay's child welfare agency

WOMEN'S ADVOCATE

When asked what he's most proud of, Hardy hesitates, as he's been involved in so many initiatives and programs supporting women that he can't remember them all right away. But he doesn't hesitate for long. "One of the biggest things we've done, and not just in Rocky Bay, has been to provide a safe community," he says. "I advocated strongly as a Chief for the Ontario Family Well-Being Program, to ensure they could bring some of the issues that are happening with women and children to the forefront so we can address them." BZA has worked closely with Anishinabek Nation on the program.

As part of their work on adopting the program, Hardy and the band council took over an unused building, refurbishing it to create a safe space for women and children facing domestic conflict. Closely related to that initiative was the development of a new bylaw under the community's constitution that gives it the authority to deal with issues of women's and children's safety head-on when local police services couldn't help. Once the bylaw was developed, getting it recognized by the provincial government proved to be a bit of a challenge, Hardy recalls. But the bylaw was recognized in court, and BZA was subsequently able to remove a few individuals whose behaviour threatened the safety of the women and children around them.

The community's Family Services Program is another point of pride. "It was born out of the necessity to ensure that my First Nation will have direct oversight over the mothers, fathers and caregivers who are challenged to raise their children in the climate of family violence, racism, discrimination, the opioid crisis - and now this pandemic," Hardy says. "There's been a lot of staff and leadership hours spent negotiating with the provincial and federal governments to develop our own system to deliver these services to our people."

Hardy has also spearheaded the establishment of Rocky Bay's own child welfare agency. (When he spoke with She is Wise, he said the original September 2021 launch date had been moved back to April of next year to allow for further preparatory staff training and capacity building.) He's especially proud of the fact that this new agency will be independent of provincially run agencies, which in turn means it can be run on a different governance model.



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"We've had our discussions about the governance of the agency," Hardy says. "We've decided to adopt a communitybased style of governance, as opposed to a corporate model. Even before I was Chief I wanted an agency that wasn't connected to the province - one that wasn't incorporated, because that would make it a creature of the government and move it away from our own laws, which are supportive."

The agency director is a woman, which isn't unusual in a community that has become a national model of female leadership. "Our band manager is female, and some of the key jobs we have in our community are held by females," Hardy says.

In addition to the band manager, who has served in the role for two decades, three of the community's four directors are women. These include the education director, who has a master's degree in education, and the health director, who has not only kept the community COVID-free, but is also actively working at the federal and provincial levels to transfer health mandates and funding to BZA so the community can build its own traditionbased approach to delivering health services.

Of the six band council members (not counting Chief Hardy himself, who is the seventh), half are women. The band's finance administrator and the newly hired human resources specialist are also women.

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Marc Cardinal Dean Smith Charlie Giglia **Steve Pratt**

NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Some of the community's female-friendly approach to hiring managers and directors arises from community tradition that predates Hardy's tenure as Chief, but a big part of its continuing acceleration is directly due to policies that he has actively pursued. "I always look for opportunities to bring in new staff, especially women. I've advocated that we go through our filed resumes from other job postings when we do post for new jobs, to see if we can interview and/or give women a chance on jobs that are thought to be primarily for men."

Much of the success the community has had in recruiting women into demanding leadership roles is due to the fact that those roles are structured to accommodate women's lives beyond the work environment. This requires a break with the typical corporate approach, which is often more punitive than understanding. It includes enabling women to obtain a higher education while they work so that they don't have to quit a job to go to school. This probably hearkens back to Chief Hardy's mother, who advocated strongly for bringing adult education to the community when she served as a councillor.

Over the years, the support and sympathy Hardy offers to women facing stressful situations means he sometimes gets contacted by women from far-flung communities, some of them powerful leaders in their own right, who find themselves encountering pushback from what he calls the 'Old Boys' Club.'

"I think of it as similar to my days as a doula, the concept of what you need to do in that role to help women. Now, when I'm advocating for women, I think back to what it takes to do that role. Yes, I'm the Chief, but I'm working with the community, and women are doing so much of the organizing. They're taking the lead."

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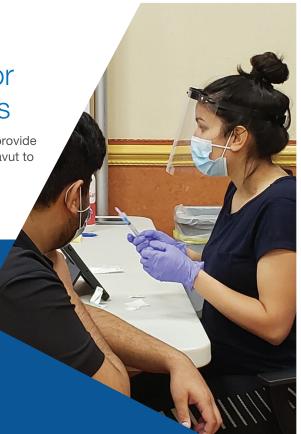
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BREAKING FREE FROM FAMILY VIOLENCE

Indigenous women experiencing violence or involved with the child welfare system have unique needs. ONWA's Breaking Free from Family Violence program supports these women in a culturally rooted, holistic way. Formerly known as Circles of Care, this special initiative:

- Helps Indigenous women navigate the complex systems they face when experiencing violence or dealing with the child welfare system
- Provides safe spaces tailored to the individual woman and her family that are culturally rooted and trauma informed
- Helps Indigenous women to create, build upon and share their "bundles"



If you or someone you know is facing these challenges, the program can be accessed at one the following ONWA Program Service Delivery sites:

KENORA

136 Main Street S, Kenora, ON P9N 1S9 Tel: 1-800-667-0816 Fax: 807-623-1104

OTTAWA

283 McLeod Street, Ottawa, ON K2P 1A1 Tel: 1-800-667-0816 Fax: 807-623-1104

TIMMINS

145 Wilson Ave, Timmins ON P4N 2T2 Tel: 1-705-360-1877 Fax: 807-623-1104

The Breaking Free from Family Violence program is also delivered via the following ONWA Chapter sites:

Fort Erie (Niagara Chapter of Native Women) 1088 Garrison Road, Fort Erie ON L2A 1N9 Tel: 905-871-8770 Fax: 905-871-9262

Hamilton (Hamilton-Wentworth Chapter of Native Women) 1900 King Street East, PO Box 69036, Hamilton ON L8K 1W0 Tel: 905-318-1822 Fax: 905-318-1870 Midland (Georgian Bay Native Women's Association) 562 King Street, Midland ON L4R 4P3 Tel: 705-527-7043 Fax: 705-527-4513

Sioux Lookout (Sunset Women's Aboriginal Circle) 26 Second Ave, Sioux Lookout ON P8T 1H2 Toll Free: 1-800-667-0816 Fax: 807-737-7031 Thunder Bay (Beendigen Inc.) 100 Anemki Dr. Suite 103, Fort William First Nation, ON P7J 1J4 Tel: 807-622-1121 Fax: 807-622-2240

Toronto (Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto) 191 Gerrard Street East, Toronto, ON M5A 3E5 Tel: 416-963-9963 Email: info@nwrct.ca

For any Indigenous woman experiencing family violence, the Breaking Free from Family Violence program is there to offer support.



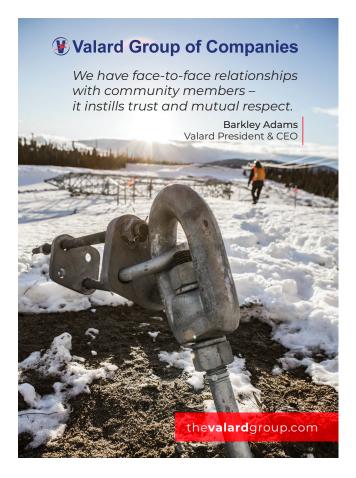
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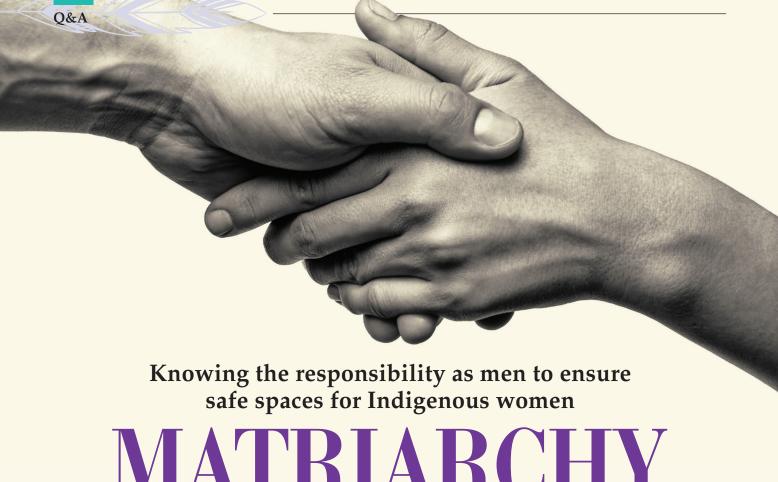
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By Sarah B. Hood

t ONWA, the work for Indigenous women is critical and that means that ONWA hires the best person for the job that needs to be done. Meet André Morriseau and Collin Graham, who both bring great passion and commitment to their positions with us.

Graham, one of ONWA's Community Development managers, is a member of Niisaachewan Anishinaabe Nation (Dalles 38 C) near Kenora. He has a long work history of supporting communities empowering youth, active involvement in HIV/AIDS initiatives, as well as raising awareness about human trafficking. This includes his work on ONWA's Journey to Safe spaces human trafficking report, as well as envisioning the Grandmother Earth Dress initiative commemorating Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

The Grandmother Earth Dress carries 365 red jingles that signify every day that Indigenous women experience violence.

Morriseau, ONWA's communications manager, is Ojibway from Fort William First Nation near Thunder Bay and grew up in Kenora. He is an award-winning communications professional who has supported Indigenous arts and public affairs through his work for numerous Indigenous organizations over the years, including Indspire and the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. He has also served on boards for organizations like the Ontario Arts Council, the imagineNATIVE Film and Media Arts Festival and the Native American Journalists Association.

She is Wise recently reached out to both of them to discuss their roles, their history and the women who have influenced their lives.

What led you to choose to work for ONWA?

COLLIN GRAHAM: I've always just done this type of work. I started working for ONWA in 2017, but my main focus has always been around women's health, and I think the reason is that I've grown up with Indigenous women.

ANDRÉ MORRISEAU: An Indigenous woman approached me and said "Would you like to come and work for us? We're opening an office in Toronto." I said, "I don't know," and she said, "You can do this."

Do you feel your personal experience has prepared you for work on behalf of Indigenous women? And if so, how?

GRAHAM: I'm Two-Spirited, and I'm never going to say that I know or have a similar experience to Indigenous women, but I will say there are a lot of parallels and systemic barriers that as a Two-Spirited man I'm forced to be confronted with. As a Two-Spirited man I walk forward with my Indigenous sisters in creating spaces where we can build upon our identity, our inherent roles and responsibilities, so that we can heal and teach others in the next generation.

MORRISEAU: I've been working in the Indigenous community for a number of years, especially celebrating Indigenous women. I worked for the national Aboriginal achievement organization Indspire, where each year we would choose 14 recipients of their awards. I did that for five years; it involved travelling with a film crew all over the country, from Igaluit to Inuvik. I also worked for the imagineNATIVE film festival, the Chiefs of Ontario and the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. Ultimately, a lot of what I've done over the years has been about celebrating the lives of Indigenous people.

We all have women in our lives who have been the women who have inspired you?

GRAHAM: I was raised by my mother, a single mom who is a paraplegic and who herself was the first rookie to make starting class on the Canadian National Basketball Team. I was raised by a very independent, very fearsome woman, and I was born at a time when my mother wasn't supported to have me because she was paraplegic. In fact, she had been told by numerous social

66 When I joined ONWA it was the most extraordinary experience, because I had never stopped in my busy, self-centred life to see the lives, the challenges and the accomplishments of Indigenous women through their lens.

I really was awakened to their inherent leadership and their traditional role

André Morriseau **ONWA Communications**



workers to terminate the pregnancy or put me up to adoption. When they asked her how she planned to take care of me, she said "I plan to take care of my baby the way I take care of myself."

She didn't have a lot of spaces and so I've always been drawn to work with Indigenous women who have had to fight for that space. She also had my little sister, who is the director of a long-term care institution. I've always been surrounded by women in my family, and I'm always about using whatever privilege I have for the women in my life to be able to be heard.

When I got to be in this place in my life was after my niece was born - she's seven years old now - and when I saw her with my mother and my sister, these three generations, I saw how powerful women are and how connected they are to the land, and for me, I have to protect them.





ONWA's communications manager André Morriseau works on a daily basis to bring awareness to women's causes: here he is addressing attendees at ONWA's She is Wise 2019 Conference. Photo courtesy of Chondon Photography

MORRISEAU: Prior to coming to ONWA, women like [Indigenous lawyer] Roberta Jamieson were an extraordinary influence in my life. I also admire my good friend Millie Knapp, whom I met [while working] at Aboriginal Voices magazine in 1988, in their Radio Project. She's from Kitigan Zibi and is the former editor and publisher of the American Indian magazine at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC. Over the years I've had the privilege of working with her and watching her extraordinary career. Today she is the executive director of the Association for Native Development in the Performing & Visual Arts (ANDPVA), the oldest Indigenous arts organization in Canada.

She is a groundbreaking journalist, and when I first started working at the magazine, she said to me, "Always capitalize the word 'Aboriginal' in your writing." That idea, like a seed, has stayed with me all these years as I've watched the times change, and today I capitalize not only "Aboriginal," but "Indigenous" and "Elders" as well.

Then I worked for another woman who had a great influence on me when I was very young at the Georgia Hotel in Vancouver and then the Wedgewood Hotel: Eleni Skalbania. She was an amazing woman, ahead of her time. She understood, she gave everybody a chance. She knew I was different and loved my sense of humour and respected that. I owe so much to her.

And certainly, I owe so much to the strength and power of my mother. Growing up in the late '60s and early '70s, she was strong, outspoken and could do anything: garden, cook... raise hell if need be.

And now both of you are heavily involved in advancing Indigenous women's issues through your work at ONWA. What have you learned through this experience?

GRAHAM: It has validated what I already know from my own experiences, but also the experiences that my mother and my sister have voiced. It's important to me not only as a man, but as a Two-Spirited man in that it has helped me realize we are all interconnected.





As Two-Spirited, we are that bridge, the connectors to ensure that we work in balance together. Balance means we move forward and we make change together.

MORRISEAU: When I joined ONWA it was the most extraordinary experience, because I had never stopped in my busy, self-centred life to see the lives, the challenges and the accomplishments of Indigenous women through their lens.

I really was awakened to their inherent leadership and their traditional role, because behind the scenes of so much accomplishment has been the work of Indigenous women on so many issues, and ONWA has been at the forefront of that. I've never been so exposed to the culture – to *my* culture, to the traditions - as I have been these past years working with ONWA. It has been a true gift from the Creator.

I look at the leadership of someone like [ONWA executive director] Cora McGuire-Cyrette. She has a calm and informed style of leadership that makes you want to succeed, and that is true leadership.

66 The best way to support women is to not think *I do the work for them.* Everything I do has always been led by women; I'm just a

Collin Graham

ONWA Community Development

facilitator 7





Solidarity means supporting **Indigenous rights**

UFCW Canada's member-led Indigenous Sub-committee sets the priorities for our national Indigenous-focused advocacy strategy. In consultation with Indigenous members, UFCW Canada (United Food and Commercial Workers union) has developed meaningful actions that pave the way to mutual respect and understanding.

Our report on our Reconciliation efforts is now available at ufcw.ca/reconciliation.

With this report, we affirm our union's commitment to ensure that worker justice is synonymous with Indigenous justice. You can find the report and more about our commitment to Reconciliation at ufcw.ca/reconciliation.



Collin Graham, ONWA's manager in community development, has spearheaded many of the association's successful initiatives. Here he is talking about Anti Human Trafficking initiatives at ONWA's Annual United Nations World Day Against Trafficking in Persons event in 2019
Photo courtesy of Chondon Photography

Can you provide a bit of insight on what you do at the association, and your key achievements in moving forward causes that are key to Indigenous women?

GRAHAM: I manage the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, the Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Liaison Program, and the Community Safety Program, which directly works with guns and gangs. I always root everything that I do in culture, and the reason I do that is that people who have been disenfranchised may feel they're not connected with it. My teaching is that we *are*

culture. Every single one of us has inherent roles and responsibilities and has gifts that we can share in the community.

I'm very proud of the work that we did regarding human trafficking with the Journey to Safe Spaces report [2016]. I'm also very proud of the Grandmother Earth Dress, which honours and acknowledges Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirited people. I was able to envision something and then make it a reality to help people. I recognized across the province that there was one continuous theme that kept coming up, and that was

the unresolved grief that women felt for their street sisters, the women that become family when you are street involved.

The Grandmother Earth Dress was intended for women who have moved into the spirit realm, to honour them and, for some, to wear as their regalia. The dress is also to let them know that they are missed and that they are loved. The best way we can honour these women is by telling their story and using that story to improve on the system. In doing so, we change the narrative to ensure Indigenous women's and girls' safety.





MORRISEAU: I'm very excited with my role in the creation of ONWA's magazine She is Wise. As much as it is the magazine of ONWA, this magazine extends far beyond the Ontario provincial boundary. It has a great reach, and I am so proud of this publication because I do not know of any other Indigenous women's magazine in Canada. It is truly a wonderful reflection of Indigenous women and a vehicle to tell the story of Indigenous women and the people who support them.

On the topic of supporting Indigenous women, how do you feel your fellow Indigenous men can best support Indigenous women?

GRAHAM: The best way to support women is to not think I do the work for them. Everything I do has always been led by women; I'm just a facilitator. The real experts in the room are the women I'm working with, especially the survivors. The best thing I can do is make sure I walk with them and not for them or ahead of them.

We need to honour the stories of women who have experienced extreme forms of exploitation and add them to our modernday bundle on how we can provide community safety. We need to create spaces for them so they can not only heal but be the teachers and leaders. When the women are strong and healthy, so is your community.

I think the best thing I could ever tell men is to secure space for women to be able to pass on their knowledge and the connections to land and community and how everything is supposed to be and work together as one.

MORRISEAU: Indigenous men need to understand the value of the leadership that Indigenous women have provided, forever. This is not something new. They've always had this leadership; they've always played this role. Men should understand the value of Indigenous women's accomplishment, their leadership and the role they played and continue to play in keeping families together throughout colonization.

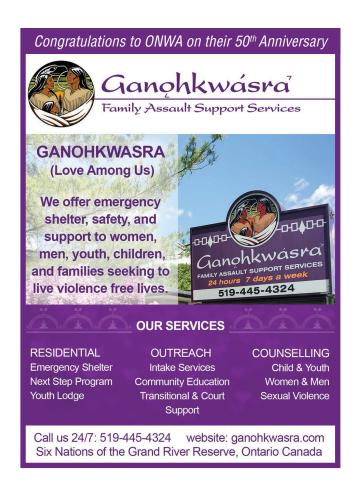
On a final note, what do you feel still remains to be done in the field of Indigenous women's issues and concerns?

GRAHAM: I'll be 42 this year, and I've been working in this field since I was about 20. I've seen where we were 20 years ago and I see young people today, and I think we're on the precipice of big change for our communities. But we have an insurmountable amount of work to do, [and] the responsibility of healing should not only be on us. Colonialism is a relational issue. To really make big change, we need people who have settled here on Turtle Island to reconnect with how colonialism affects us all, because we will not see change until we get to a place where we can all connect.

MORRISEAU: There is still much to be done to elevate the rightful place of Indigenous women in the national dialogue. Yet as a Two-Spirited man in his 60s, I have never felt more empowered and appreciated than I have in these years working at ONWA with extraordinary Indigenous women.













CONGRATULATIONS to ONWA for their 50th Anniversary!

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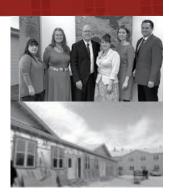








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Congratulations to you, Ontario Native Women's Association on your 50th Anniversary!

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CINA is extremely proud to be marking the 50th Anniversary of the Ontario Native Women's Association. This is a significant milestone that very few Indigenous organizations have achieved. ONWA is at the forefront of building new, dynamic and respected programs or services that extend to all Indigenous women and their families.

Reflecting on the long history of this organization, I would like to acknowledge the many leaders whose matriarchs built this organization from one small room so long ago. We are still fortunate to have some of these members with us today and I thank you for your continued commitment and extensive leadership as the legacy continues on with a new generation. This is more than an organization's anniversary; it is a family celebration that continues to grow strong and reflect on the great things together. Your creativity and dedication to the work of ONWA's chapters can only be

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