



**Native Women's
Association of Canada**

**2022-2023
PRESIDENT'S CORNER**



**49TH ANNUAL
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

CAROL MCBRIDE



Carol McBride, President of the Native Women's Association of Canada

Being elected as your President stands as one of the greatest honours of my life. The combination of my personal journey and your collective experiences, knowledge and passion creates the driving force to propel me and my office forward toward change.

My mother was disenfranchised by the Indian Act. I faced discrimination as a little girl because I didn't have status. As a former Chief and councillor of Timiskaming First Nation and a past Grand Chief of the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation Tribal Council, I am no stranger to fighting for the protection of our land and water rights.

However, as the political leader for NWAC it is not lost on me how many issues our women and gender diverse people face from coast to coast to coast. This year was eventful. There were obstacles and successes.

It's easy to become discouraged when the government drags its feet on the implementation of the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Women and Girls (MMIWG) Calls for Justice. It's discouraging when NWAC continues to be excluded at decision making tables due to the distinctions-based approach. In addition, the lack of political will to uphold rights for urban Indigenous people is frustrating, but every day I make the choice to rise and fight for those that NWAC serves.

This report is designed as a high-level overview of this eventful year. In addition to political meetings, I attended briefings with my adviser, engaged with media, triaged, and responded to emails, work plans and scheduled high-level meetings. However, one of the greatest honours was

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RECONCILIATION

chairing committee and board meetings. I am amazed at the experience and knowledge each board member brings to the table. Our internal governance is something I take great pride in.

Within weeks of my election, I was invited by the Governor General of Canada, Her Excellency Mary Simon to a gathering with His Holiness Pope Francis at Rideau Hall where he issued an apology for the abuses Indigenous Peoples experienced at Residential Schools.



President McBride and Premier of Quebec Francois Legault

The gathering also created an opportunity for me to introduce myself to Premier Francois Legault of Quebec.

On July 30, 2022, I participated virtually in the Meeting of Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) that was held in the Yukon. I spoke about the unique role Indigenous women hold in protecting Mother Earth and demanded we have a seat at the table when climate change is being discussed.

The summer was packed full of orientation as the role presented a steep learning curve. I was thankful for the support of our CEO, Lynne Groulx.

The fall brought many high-level opportunities. On September 9, 2022, I attended the Decorations of Bravery ceremony at the residence of the Governor General.

On September 19, I attended the National Commemorative Ceremony in honour of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II Queen of Canada in Ottawa. Doug Ford sat in front of me and introduced himself.

On September 28, 2022, I was a part of the Indigenous Women's Advisory Committee (IWAC) meeting with Minister Patty Hajdu. I urged the immediate implementation of the 231 Calls for Justice.

On the heels of Truth and Reconciliation Day, we began the month of October with our Sisters in Spirit Vigil. I had the opportunity to go to Ottawa for the Vigil. It was also the first time that I met with Minister Marc Miller, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) at NWAC's head office. We had an in-person tour of NWAC's new Social and Economic Innovation Centre.

I had the honour to meet with Senator Michele Audette, a former commissioner responsible for conducting the National Inquiry into MMIWG. Senator Audette is part of the rich history of Quebec native women and as such has a genuine interest in NWAC's priorities. As a registered lobbyist, I used the opportunity to lobby for actionable outcomes for missing and murdered women and gender diverse people such as an amber alert bill.

On October 27, 2022, I appeared as a witness to address the exclusion of NWAC on Bill C-29, An Act to provide for the establishment of a

national council for reconciliation which was tabled by Minister Miller on June 22, 2022. The bill is a response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) Calls to Action numbers 53 and 55. The council's board of directors will be composed of a minimum of nine and a maximum of 13 directors. The original text of the bill excluded NWAC in the nomination process. I was successful in amending the bill to rectify this oversight. On November 14, I received a call from Minister Marc Miller. He informed me that an amendment to Bill C-29 had been successfully passed in the House of Commons, granting NWAC a seat on the council's board.

The bill is currently at second reading in the Senate. I testified before the Senate's Standing Committee on Indigenous Peoples (APPA) on the evening of June 14, 2023. I highlighted the value that our membership will bring to the council.

On October 20, 2022, I appeared as witness for NWAC on the Subject Matter of Bill C-28, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (self-induced extreme intoxication). Parliament must address the systemic factors contributing to Indigenous women's substance misuse and



Indigenous women's overincarceration rates. Indigenous violence survivors must have access to healing frameworks in alignment with their Indigenous approach to healing. Parliament must address the remaining legal gap wherein Indigenous violence survivors are left with no culpable offender when the self-induced extreme intoxication defence applies.

The National Apprenticeship Program (NAP) was also announced during the month of October.



President McBride and Minister Marc Miller, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada



With funding from the Government of Canada, NWAC's NAP advocates for the inclusion of our women and gender diverse people in the construction and manufacturing trades. Through NAP, NWAC's goal is to connect small and medium-sized enterprises with Indigenous candidates who would qualify and receive first-year apprenticeships in one of the program's 39 Red Seal skilled trade occupations. The program offers a unique opportunity to address the gender gap in historically male-dominated occupations. Currently, only 5 per cent of skilled trade workers in Canada are women. There is a NAP Board Committee that is mandated to advance NWAC's project objectives.

On November 2, I appeared before the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples (APPA) to discuss the constitutional, treaty, political, and legal responsibilities towards First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. NWAC has a crucial partnership with Canada, as outlined in the NWAC-Canada Accord. For Canada to uphold this partnership, it is essential that NWAC is included in decisions that impact us. NWAC is committed to sharing our experiences and providing recommendations on how to dismantle systems that continue to cause harm to our women and gender diverse people.

On November 7, I had the privilege of engaging in a meeting with the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women. I spoke about the economic empowerment of Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, transgender and gender diverse people and how vital our economic successes are for our communities.

In November, the Board of Directors attended a 2-day strategic planning session. Although not all members were able to attend in person, we were able to facilitate participation online. It was

clear that the Board is committed to building a strong, resilient organization through internal capacity and strong communications between Provincial-Territorial Membership Associations (PTMAs) and the national organization. Elevating the grassroots voice to the national level is crucial. I am committed to this goal as NWAC is only as strong as our PTMAs.

On November 21 and 22, we were fortunate to have a 2-day training workshop that was recorded and distributed for all to participate. The workshop pertained to Federal Reconciliation Approach & Indigenous Governance and was facilitated by Russell Diabo, Policy Analyst. We had a guest speaker, David Nahwegahbow, where he, and his law firm, discussed amendments to the Indian Act.

2023 STARTED OFF ON A STRONG NOTE WITH THE FIRST EVER ROUNDTABLE OF INDIGENOUS LEADERS AND REPRESENTATIVES AND FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL, TERRITORIAL MINISTERS ON MMIWG2S+ THAT TOOK PLACE IN A VIRTUAL SETTING ON JANUARY 10, 2023. MORE THAN 250 INDIGENOUS WOMEN, SURVIVORS, FAMILY MEMBERS AND MEMBERS OF INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATIONS ATTENDED.

High Commissioner of New Zealand
President McBride



I raised the challenges that urban Indigenous women and gender diverse people are facing and the urgent need to address those. On the same day, Minister Miller announced the appointment of Jennifer Moore Rattray as a ministerial special representative who will advance work in the establishment of an ombudsperson. However, he did not announce any timelines associated with her mandate which I criticized in the media.

On February 10, I spoke with the Globe and Mail about the slow pace of Ottawa's spending on the \$724.1-million investment meant to support Indigenous women and children facing violence. I am very concerned about the government dragging their feet to the detriment of our people. Access to culturally appropriate shelters is a must.

In February I stacked high-level meetings in Ottawa, the first with Minister Miller at his office. It was a productive meeting. I lobbied for an increase in core funding as well as enhanced core funding for PTMAs. I did receive pushback, but I will continue to lobby for PTMA capacity and core and sustainable funding pursuant to Call for Justice 1.8. I took the opportunity to ask Minister Miller for his help in securing a meeting with the Prime Minister since that is a broken promise under the NWAC-Canada Accord. The Minister did say he will try and facilitate that request, as best as he can.

On February 16, I met with the High Commissioner of New Zealand. He advised that on August 24, 2022, Patty Hajdu, Minister of Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), signed an Indigenous Collaboration Arrangement between Canada and Aotearoa-New Zealand. The High Commissioner was excited to share ways in which he believes we can work together under that agreement.

Later that day, I met with Minister Counselor for Public Affairs, Christina Higgins from the United States (US) Embassy and her team. Counselor Higgins was excited to renew a relationship with NWAC.

The last day of February I joined other Indigenous leaders in a meeting with the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations (UN), Bob Rae to discuss the upcoming 67th United Nations Commission of the Status of Women (UNCSW67). The theme was Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. NWAC had a delegation who took this



President Carol McBride and Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations (UN), Bob Rae



Meeting with US Embassy (Ottawa) Counselor Christina Higgins

opportunity to discuss how Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people can keep safe online.

On March 14, I met with Pam Damoff who is the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety to discuss Bill C-21, An Act to amend certain Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (firearms). I made sure the Parliamentary Secretary knew that this was an informational session only and did not amount to a consultation.

On March 16, I gave a speech to all NWAC staff in honour of the Staff Recognition Awards. I expressed my honour to have all our life journeys collide. I also expressed sincere gratitude for their exceptional work and commitment to making the world a kinder, safer place for Indigenous Peoples.

On March 20, 2023, I met with Dan Vandel – Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency. I advised that I wanted to foster a positive relationship with the Minister. It was a successful meeting. We discussed issues such as food insecurity and housing needs in the North. Minister Vandel noted that he'd be happy to work with me at the 22nd United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) as part of the Canadian delegation.

On March 21, 2023, I met with Minister of Housing, Ahmed Hussen to discuss the Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy. I invited the Minister to NWAC's Social, Cultural, and Economic Innovation Centre to discuss further.

My interim adviser and I spent the work week of March 27 to March 31 in Ottawa. On March 27, we were briefed on the role of our CEO. We also attended a reception at NWAC that was hosted by the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP). On

March 28, we were briefed on the international file. On March 29 we were briefed on the Resiliency lodges and our warehouse.

Given that the federal budget was released on March 28, and it was disappointing in terms of funding for MMIWG, I was successful in scheduling a meeting with Minister Marc Miller on March 30. I met with Minister Miller to lobby once again for increased core and enhanced core funding for sustainable and equitable funding pursuant to Call for Justice 1.8 and follow up on last months meeting. In addition, I successfully lobbied for increased funding for participation at the UNPFII.

On March 30, I also virtually met with Kimberly Murray who was appointed as Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites. She highlighted her concerns with the investigation. She hopes to work with NWAC (national office and PTMAs) to have our voice heard during community gatherings. She advised that there is a special gathering in Montreal in September and that our presence would be greatly appreciated. I will be attending the gathering in September.

President McBride and Minister of Housing, Ahmed Hussen



On March 31, I hosted a meeting with the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, David Lametti. We discussed areas where we can work together. I advised him that NWAC must be included in important justice decision making tables. However, Lametti remained firm that he will be working within the government's 2015 decision to apply a distinctions-based approach. Despite not seeing eye to eye on that issue, we had a very successful meeting.

On April 12, I met with Ambassador Bob Rae as he wanted to talk to Indigenous leaders prior to the twenty-second session of the UNPFII that took place from April 17 – 28, 2023. I advised him that I could not travel because I had contracted COVID-19. He was disappointed that I would not be joining and wished me good health. He also extended an open invitation for me to visit New York and to meet with him at Canada's Permanent Mission.

President McBride and Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau



Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, David Lametti



Lynne Groulx, President McBride, Dr. Ivan Zinger



I received an invitation on behalf of Their Excellencies the Right Honourable Mary Simon, Governor General of Canada, and Mr. Whit Fraser, to attend a State Luncheon in honour of His Excellency Frank-Walter Steinmeier, President of the Federal Republic of Germany, and First Lady, Elke Bűdenbender. It was initially planned to be hosted at the Governor General's residence but was later moved to the Embassy of Germany in Ottawa. Amongst those in attendance were the German Ambassador, Sabine Sparwasser, the Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau and Sophie Grégoire Trudeau and the National Chief Elmer St. Pierre of CAP.

I spoke about the importance of family with the Prime Minister and officially invited him to NWAC. I reiterated that message to Sophie. Our office received correspondence from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) at the end of April that expressed a desire and commitment to work with our office.

On April 25 I had the sincere honour to meet with the Correctional Investigator of Canada, Dr. Ivan Zinger. We hosted him and members of his staff at NWAC. CEO, Lynne Groulx, was also in the meeting. We had a fruitful discussion about the crisis facing our women in federal prisons as well as healing lodges and adequate funding in that regard. He advised that the Commissioner of the Correctional Service of Canada, Anne Kelly has a mandate that includes prioritizing working with and funding Indigenous organizations to ensure that Indigenous offenders have access to culturally relevant programming and supports in the community.

The month of April ended strong with a very successful By-Law Review Session on April 28 and 29. I want to thank everyone for their valuable inputs. It demonstrated the strength of our Board and thus our internal governance.



On May 2, my office underwent media training with Joan Weinman, NWAC's Chief Communications Strategist. Ms. Weinman gave us an overview of the media and the positives of interacting with them. We discussed interview skills, techniques to better handle the media and how to create compelling messages.

Mel Critch of Manitoba Moon Voices Inc. (MMVI) advised me of a motion that was to be presented by Winnipeg Centre New Democratic Party (NDP) Member of Parliament (MP) Leah Gazan. On May 2, the House of Commons adopted the motion unanimously. It calls on the federal government to declare ongoing violence against Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people a national emergency. It also calls on the government to provide an "immediate and substantial investment" to create a public alert system for missing Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people. I thanked Ms. Gazan for her motion. I also sent out a Press Release and talked with the National Observer. I told the National Observer

that not only is the government not investing in MMIWG2s+ funding, but they are clawing back essential funding in relation to women's shelters.

On May 3, I spoke with City News regarding the University of Toronto (Mississauga campus) research findings about how police repeatedly dismiss and justify violence against Indigenous women in Canada. They asked what this means for Indigenous women and police relations. I advised that the study proves what we already know as Indigenous Peoples and the broken relationship between our people and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

On May 4, myself and Patty Hajdu, Minister of ISC announced the expansion of NWAC's Safe Passage initiative with new online tools, as well as the establishment of the Safe Passage Women's Safety Council. The announcement was drafted in January, and we had been waiting on the Minister to release it to the public. The announcement got traction from APTN; therefore, I spoke with them about the program and new safety council. I also spoke about the importance of our PTMAs in this initiative.

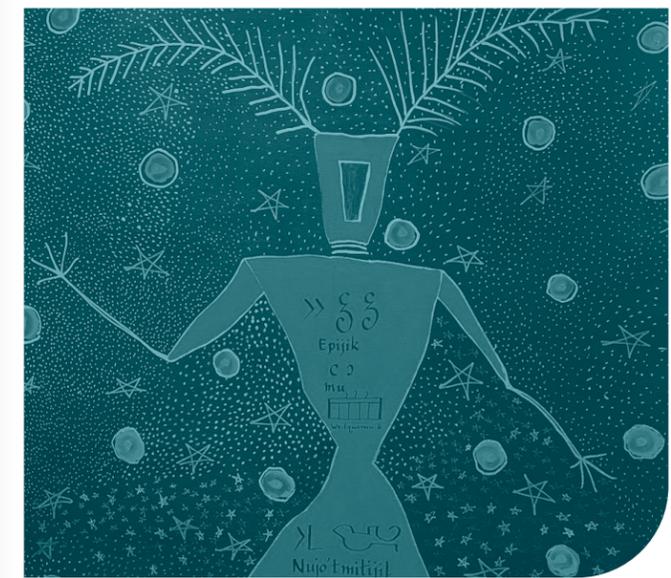
On May 4, I spoke with the Globe and Mail, CBC, and the Canadian Press about the National Day of Awareness for the prevention of violence against Indigenous women, also known as Red Dress Day. May 5 was a busy day. In addition to multiple media interviews (580 CFRA Ottawa, APTN, Associated Press) I participated in NWAC's commemoration event to honour and bring awareness to the thousands of MMIWG2S+ across Canada. Minister Marc Miller was in attendance at the art unveiling portion of the agenda. MP Jamie Batiste (the first Mi'kmaq Member of Parliament in Canada) was also in attendance.

That momentum continued into May 6 when NWAC hosted a MMIWG2S+ Roundtable. Senator Michelle Audette, PTMAs and NWAC staff

gathered to discuss the many issues surrounding the genocide against our loved ones. We also discussed NWAC's Action Plan - Our Calls; Our Actions, and the Federal Action Plan as well as ways to accelerate their implementation with greater transparency and accountability. Senator Audette, our CEO Lynne Groulx, and I also held a private meeting to discuss upcoming events such as an opportunity to brief the Senate on NWAC's priorities including creating an amber alert bill.

On May 11, I attended the 30th Indspire Awards in Edmonton, Alberta and helped honour First Nations, Inuit, and Métis individuals who demonstrate outstanding achievements from coast to coast to coast. In addition, I was thrilled to be on stage to present the Indspire Arts Award to Sandra Laronde.

On May 12, I attended the 27th Esquao Awards hosted by the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women (IAAW). The theme this year was Amplifying the Spirit, Strength, and Resiliency of Indigenous Women. It was held at Grey Eagle Resort and Casino in Calgary, Alberta.



NWAC's commemoration event to honour and bring awareness to the thousands of MMIWG2S+ across Canada

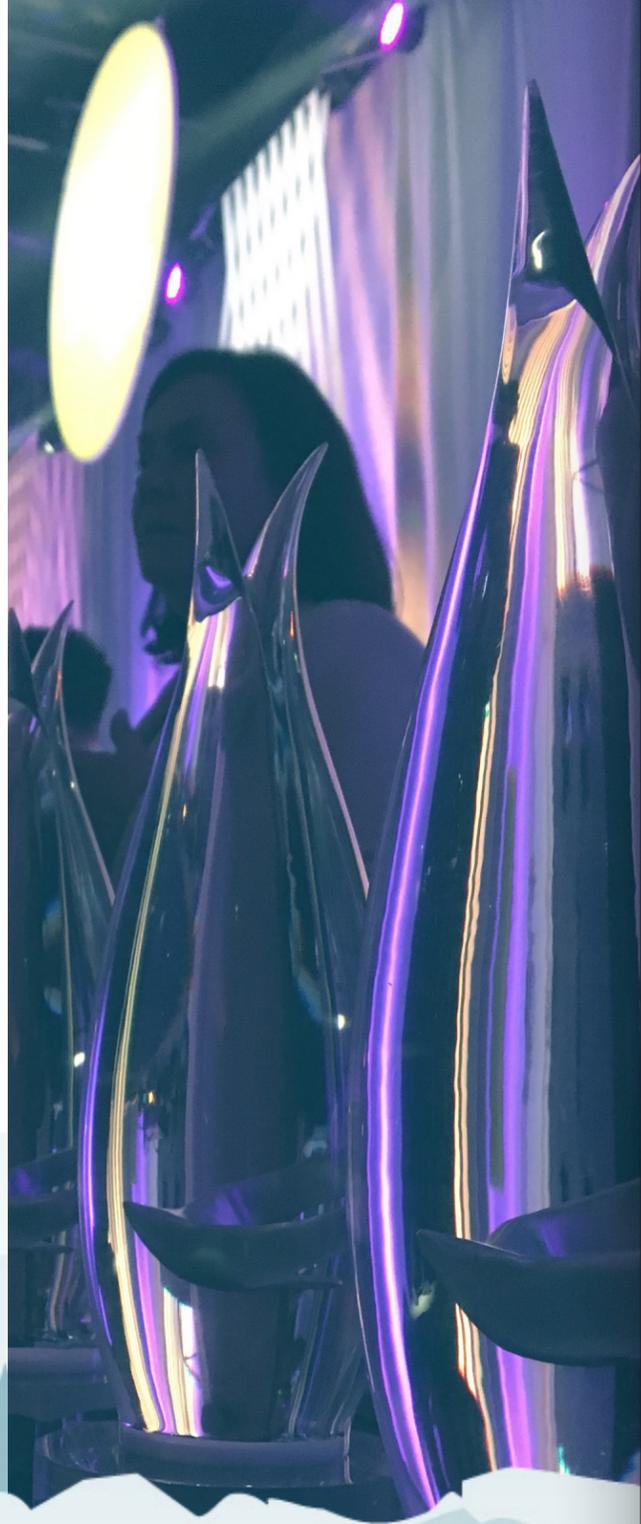
IN ADDITION, I CALLED FOR THE IMMEDIATE RESIGNATION OF PIERRE DUFOUR (VIA A PRESS RELEASE AND AN INTERVIEW WITH APTN NATIONAL NEWS), SINCE THE MNA SUGGESTED NUMEROUS TIMES THAT INDIGENOUS WOMEN LIED ABOUT BEING SEXUALLY ASSAULTED BY POLICE OFFICERS IN QUEBEC. THE TRUTHFUL TESTIMONIES OF THOSE WOMEN PROMPTED THE VIENS COMMISSION AND ITS 142 RECOMMENDATIONS TO REPAIR RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND QUEBEC PUBLIC SERVICES.

On May 26, I was honoured to travel to Ottawa and attend the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards and dinner reception on behalf of Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary Simon. It is inspiring to see the creative talents this country has to offer.

On June 5, we had the privilege of hosting Minister Marci Ien, Minister Greg Fergus, and MP Sophie Chatel. They made an important announcement, granting \$1.15 million in funding to the NWAC for two projects: PTMA Liaisons: Grassroots Partnership and Capacity Building, and Kewabadjmin: SEEing Ourselves.

The following day, on June 6, I participated in an interview with CTV National News regarding the government's failure to implement the MMIWG Calls for Justice, critically examining the lack of progress four years after the Final Report of MMIWG was released.

On June 7, I had the honour of attending a reception at the residence of the United States Ambassador, held in celebration of LGBTQ+ Pride Month and in recognition of Jessica Stern, Special Envoy to Advance the Human Rights of LGBTQ+ Persons.



Esquao Awards hosted by the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women (IAAW)





On June 9, I participated with other members of our Board to discuss Bill C-38, An Act to amend the Indian Act (new registration entitlements). It was a difficult but productive discussion. The discrimination that our members live under the Act is completely unjust and it is blatantly apparent that this bill does not go far enough.

A meeting with Senator Michelle Audette took place on June 11, during which we discussed shared priorities such as advancing our amber alert bill for missing Indigenous Peoples.

I MET WITH MINISTER MILLER ON JUNE 12 TO LOBBY FOR INCREASED FUNDING AND TO LODGE MOVEMENT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 231 CALLS FOR JUSTICE.

I am grateful to my First Vice- President, Gena Edwards, for stepping in as acting president during my leave in June. I am thankful to Gena for taking my place at both the Housing and Canadian Heritage federal/provincial/territorial Indigenous (FPTIs) in my absence. Thank you, Gena, for your hard work and dedication.

On July 11, 2023, I participated at the annual meeting of Premiers in Winnipeg. I discussed the important work NWAC's PTMAs are doing to enhance Indigenous lives. I also reported on the lack of action taken by all governments to address the 231 Calls for Justice which was compounded by the sound of drumming from an outside protest demanding that the local Prairie Green landfill be searched for the remains of Indigenous women.

NWAC's participation at the Premiers meeting was met with backlash from the Metis National Council (MNC) and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) which is unfortunate as they are our brothers and sisters. I spoke to media and advised that we would be stronger if we worked together. I also stated that I cannot see why they would object to us bringing forth the needs of our women. In any event, the meeting was a great success, and I was happy to be supported by our CEO and Mx. Critch.

On July 26, 2023, I participated virtually in the Meeting of Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME). I spoke about the important role of Indigenous women as water carriers and urged Environment ministers from coast to coast to coast again that we must be a part of climate change discussions and decision making. Indigenous women's ways of knowing are crucial to these negotiations.

On July 31, I travelled to Prince Edward Island (PEI) to participate in the Meeting between Federal-

Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Ministers responsible for the Status of Women and the National Indigenous Leaders and Representatives (NILRs) where we had a roundtable on how we can work together to implement the 231 Calls for Justice. I was honoured to be accompanied by Matilda Ramjattan, President of PEI's PTMA.

I make it a priority to schedule high-level and political meetings during my visits to the national office every six weeks. My goal is to showcase our impressive Social, Economic, and Innovation center in Gatineau, which never fails to leave politicians speechless. I take this opportunity to lobby for increased core and enhanced core funding as well as pushing for movement on the implementation of the 231 Calls for Justice.

Thank you to all our members for your tireless advocacy. I look forward to the year ahead.

In Solidarity,

Carol McBride, President



Meeting of National Indigenous Organization Leaders and Premiers





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