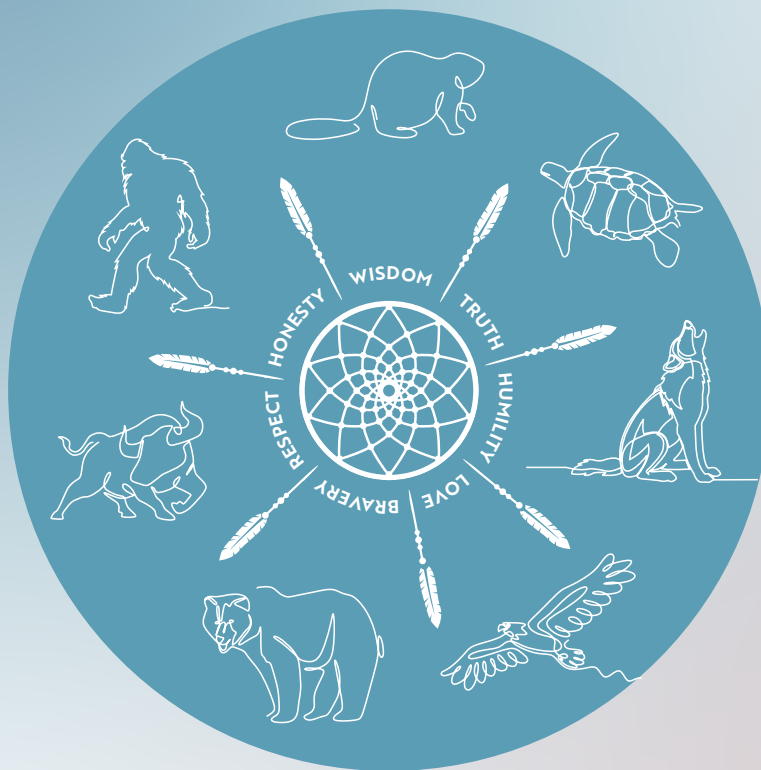




# NWAC

## PRESIDENT'S *Report*



AUGUST 2022

[nwac.ca](http://nwac.ca)

Native Women's Association of Canada  
L'Association des femmes autochtones du Canada



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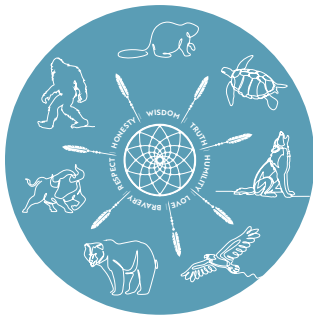
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## REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT

In July of this year, I was honoured and humbled to be elected President of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC). This report from the Office of the President reflects the work I have undertaken from the moment I took office to the end of August.



**"The Seven Grandfather Teachings of Wisdom, Love, Respect, Bravery, Honesty, Humility, and Truth guide my relationships. As a grassroots Indigenous woman leader, I am committed to building the political, social, and economic capacity of Indigenous women in community."**

I was immediately welcomed by the CEO Lynne Groulx and her amazing team at NWAC for a 3-day orientation and training session. I toured our new Social and Economic Innovation Centre located in Gatineau, Quebec and was able to see first-hand what our incredible staff have been able to achieve under the leadership of the CEO despite the challenges COVID presented to the growth and sustainability of organizations across the country. This hub of social and economic innovation exemplifies the strength and resiliency of Indigenous women and gender diverse individuals. It features exclusive Indigenous artwork, a cafe, an artisan boutique, and meeting spaces that recognize and honour the distinctness of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis.



CAROL MCBRIDE - NWAC PRESIDENT





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. Her Excellency's response was wise and one I fully endorse,

"Today was a day that moved us forward, giving Survivors words that may help them heal. Yet it is also a day that can raise complex emotions, especially as the Papal visit continues. It is for each Survivor and their families to decide how they feel and what they need to move forward. And it is for each of us to continue embracing hope and supporting reconciliation not just through words, but also through actions."



The release of Residential School Records and the return of tribal artifacts that reside at the Vatican are two immediate actions that would signify His Holiness Pope Francis was ready to take the path of reconciliation.

The gathering also created an opportunity for me to introduce myself Premier Francois Legault who issued his own apology in 2019 for the way the Province of Quebec has treated Indigenous Peoples. Follow up on how the province of Quebec and other jurisdictions will respond to the Murdered and Missing Women and Girls Calls to Action is a priority for my tenure as NWAC President.

In August, I continued to engage in training and debriefing sessions with staff at





NWAC. I reviewed the current bylaws and proposed changes, and I attended a governance training session. I established a regional office within my community of Timiskaming First Nation and was able to recruit two very experienced women to staff my team. We meet daily as a team and weekly with management at NWAC to keep abreast of critical portfolios and to maintain strong advocacy in all sectors which affect indigenous women, girls, and gender diverse people in Canada.





## TEAM PROFILES

Arlene Hache holds the position of Advisor to the President, and Yvonne Haddad Executive Assistant to the President. Both are very qualified and experienced individuals who are community-oriented and committed to advancing the rights of Indigenous women and gender diverse people in Canada and globally.



ARLENE HACHE, C.M. MA IN LEADERSHIP

*A grassroots activist leader with a focus on personal empowerment and community development*

Arlene Hache is a settler, a grassroots woman who has experienced homelessness and traumatic impacts of childhood violence. She has an MA in Leadership from Royal Roads University. Arlene founded, and over two decades, led an urban-based family resource centre located in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories that provided support to marginalized women and their families, the majority of which were Indigenous. She is well-known as an advocate for social change and in recognition of her work was awarded the Order of Canada in 2009 and then the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012. Of equal importance, Arlene was honoured with a Star Blanket ceremony guided by Wisdom Keepers and hosted by Keepers of the Circle, an Indigenous Hub in Northeastern Ontario. Arlene is a published author and has participated on several research teams that gives voice to people with lived experience. She has also served on territorial, national, and international boards that address gender equality, and systemic responses to mental illness and homelessness.





## TEAM PROFILES

Yvonne Haddad is a first-generation Lebanese Canadian citizen. She is an Honours BA graduate from the University of Ottawa with a Human Resource Management course accreditation from the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue. She is fluent in both English and Arabic.



YVONNE HADDAD

Yvonne and her husband who is a member of Timiskaming First Nation moved from Ottawa to her husband's home community. She was hired as the Human Resource Administrative Assistant by the First Nation and within six months advanced to the position of Human Resources Manager.

Yvonne is an ally of Indigenous women and an advocate of our political, social, economic, and cultural rights. She is appreciative to have been given the opportunity to work for NWAC and is very approachable. In her spare time, Yvonne enjoys reading, cooking, and snuggling with her cat, Salem.

Subsequent to my election I chaired an Executive Committee meeting and two Board of Directors meetings. I admire the strong, Indigenous women leaders that collectively form our board, and I look forward to actioning positive change that will affect the lives of Indigenous women, girls, and gender diverse people over the course of my 3-year presidency.





## FOLLOW-UP ON EMERGING ISSUES

Meetings were scheduled with each Provincial and Territorial Member Association (PTMA) so I could familiarize myself with the diverse contexts, needs and priorities of Indigenous women from across the country. I committed to following up on our coffee chats to provide PTMAs with information and support they need to action change that is needed at the organizational and political level.

I reviewed NWAC's *Our Calls, Our Actions* report and the results of two MMIWG2S + Scorecards released on June 2, 2022. The Scorecards measured NWAC's progress over the past year on 66 action items that will address the pathways to violence and end the genocide of Indigenous women and girls. With all credit due to the past Board of Directors and staffing team at NWAC, the results revealed there had been movement forward on 58 of the 66 action items. Throughout my tenure, we will continue the work on fully implementing every action listed in our Action Plan going forward.

At the invitation of Senator Michèle Audet I reviewed the *Not Enough, all words and no action* report on the government response to the MMIWG report published by the Senatorial Committee on Indigenous Peoples and *The Scars that We Carry: Forced and Coerced Sterilization of Persons in Canada* published by the Senatorial Committee on Human Rights. I have scheduled a meeting with the Senator to explore how we might collaborate on addressing these issues.

I issued a statement calling upon the federal government to negotiate a rapid return to this country for Dawn Walker, an Okanese Cree woman who was being held in an Oregon jail after fleeing to the United States with her seven-year-old son. Dawn Walker says she left Canada because she feared for her safety, and she says she suffers from PTSD because of domestic abuse. Dawn was returned to Canada at the end of August and is currently facing charges in this country.





The Supreme Court of Canada has found that Indigenous women who are victims of violence face barriers and discrimination within the justice system, especially when it comes to having their stories of abuse given the same credence that is extended to non-Indigenous women. The MMIWG National Inquiry called upon governments to develop enhanced, holistic, and comprehensive approaches to the provision of support to Indigenous victims of crime. NWAC called upon governments and justice systems to apply those same approaches in cases of Indigenous women like Ms. Walker who allege that they were forced to take drastic action to avoid becoming another criminal statistic. This situation opens a wider narrative of the risk first nations women face, and the systemic difficulties they are presented when reaching out to faculties that are mandated to protect them.

I also issued a public statement on the nomination of Justice Michelle O'Bonsawin, an Abenaki member of the Odanak First Nation to the Supreme Court of Canada. As the first Indigenous person to hold a seat on the highest court in the land, this appointment is ground-breaking for many reasons. Most importantly, young Indigenous women from coast to coast to coast know they can aspire to become lawyers and judges, and even Supreme Court Justices – their potential is as great as their dreams.





## MEETINGS AND GATHERINGS



I participated via online in the Meeting of Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment. 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. Indigenous women are not prepared to sit on the sidelines as world leaders, or even Canadian leaders, dither about what incremental steps they can take next to appease our concerns.

We are living in a period of extreme weather events – droughts, heat waves, increased incidents of violent weather. These pose hardships for everyone, but especially for Indigenous people like us whose way of life is so tied to the land. The migratory patterns of the animals we rely upon for sustenance is being altered. The plants we traditionally harvest no longer grow in places that our grandmothers reliably found them. The instability of sea ice makes hunting a precarious activity for the Inuit.

We want to be part of the planning for climate adaptation. That does not mean simple consultation. It is our communities, our ways of life, the lives of our children and our children's children that are at risk.





2022	INTERVIEWS WITH:
JULY 19	the National Observer on President McBride's Leadership
JULY 19	APTN on President McBride's leadership
JULY 22	CP24 regarding the visit with the Pope
JULY 22	CJTT regarding President McBride's presidency
JULY 25	NPR on whether the Pope's visit can contribute to the healing and what else the Vatican and the local church could do to redress past actions
JULY 26	CP24 regarding a response to the Pope's apology
JULY 26	CBC Ottawa President Carol McBride's leadership, her experience her priorities
JULY 27	CTV NEWS regarding the apology of the Pope and what will happen in Quebec
AUG 1	ICT from the States regarding the response to the Pope's Visit and President McBride's Leadership
AUG 15	the Canadian Press regarding Dawn Walker
AUG 15	APTN regarding Dawn Walker
AUG 20	CTV News on the release of the 2015 document in which the federal government let the Catholic Church out of its obligation to raise \$25 million for healing programs for residential school survivors, and paid the church's legal bill.
AUG 24	CTV News, on the appointment of Michelle O'Bonsawin to the Supreme Court
AUG 24	Global News, on the appointment of Michelle O'Bonsawin to the Supreme Court

[National Indigenous group asks Ottawa to act quickly to bring Indigenous woman home | ThePeterboroughExaminer.com](https://www.thepeterboroughexaminer.com/news/local/national-indigenous-group-asks-ottawa-to-act-quickly-to-bring-indigenous-woman-home)

[Indigenous women's groups pushing to bring Dawn Walker home - APTN News](https://www.aptn.ca/en/news/indigenous-women-groups-pushing-to-bring-dawn-walker-home)

As school begins, and children are back in class, and as Autumn approaches, I wish health and happiness to you and your families.

Meegwetch, Thank you, Merci,

*Carol McBride* - NWAC President



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