

NWAC President's Report

This publication highlights the various activities the President has undertaken throughout the month of January.



LORRAINE WHITMAN

Lorraine Whitman was elected as the President of the Native Women's Association of Canada on September 14, 2019. Prior to her presidency at NWAC, Ms. Whitman served as President of the Nova Scotia Native Women's Association and has been advocating for Indigenous women's rights over the past 45 years.

My Dear Friends,

Happy 2022! This year, it is my hope that we have a better year.

On January 4, National Ribbon Skirt Day, we celebrated as Indigenous women, girls, gender-diverse, and Two-Spirited. We encouraged everyone to wear their own ribbon skirts and be proud! One's ribbon skirt is not just a skirt but has a story woven into it. My own represents the strength and unity of our women across Turtle Island.

This month I had a chance to meet with Minister Miller, where we discussed how we are hearing a positive response about his new leadership; we are hearing words such as "genuine and compassionate." We were losing faith in the past relationship with the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Affairs, but we are regaining that trust and faith through the commitments being made to Indigenous Peoples. I do feel that re-establishing a relationship with Mr. Miller's department is so important.

From NWAC's perspective, we were pleased to be able to discuss the Accord and renew our relationship with the department. With respect to the Accord, I stressed the importance of:

1. meetings at our level (Minister and President)
2. NWAC at decision-making tables
3. funding for the organization to do its work

I asked that the Minister meet with NWAC more often so that we can give perspectives from grassroots Indigenous women. I stressed the decades of experience that NWAC has working with women on the ground; that we have community-led, practical solutions to share; and that we are ready and able to do our part to help move away from colonization. Although the commitment for NWAC to be at discussion and decision-making tables is in the Accord, NWAC consistently learns about meetings that we have not been included in. We asked the Minister of Crown Relations to ensure that we are given the opportunity to be included as our voices are important and need to be heard.

With respect to funding for the organization, we have been asking for years for increased funding. I pointed to NWAC's Action Plan, which I offered to forward to Minister Miller for review. The Plan includes a measurable cost analysis for the various 231 calls—whether it's culture, language, or the environment.

A Canada-NWAC Accord was signed on February 1, 2019. Over this three-year period, we have asked for a commitment to hold regular meetings; to ensure NWAC is at decision-making tables; and to resolve the funding issues. Our work with women, girls, and gender-diverse people has not stopped with the pandemic. While the pandemic has made things difficult, we have continued to meet the needs of our women, but we need sustainable funding to continue to do this work.

On another note, I had to take the time to do COVID-19 self-testing. As leaders of our community, it is important that we show our support towards the people whom we represent and that we show by example. COVID-19 is serious; it does take lives. I believe the health regulations are working and I have no issues leading the way in this regard.



This topic came up during an interview I held this month with Atlanta Global Innovation. We talked about Indigenous communities around the world that are the most vulnerable to contracting viruses. We also discussed issues of malnutrition, a lack of clean water and inadequate health care—which exacerbate Indigenous people’s vulnerability to a virus like COVID-19.

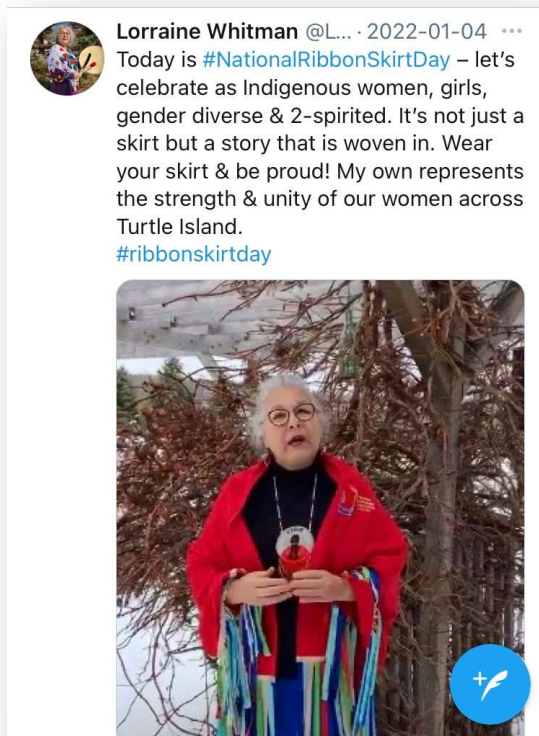
The following points were made during this interview:

- The COVID-related deaths of Elders in Indigenous communities around the world represent further cultural loss.
- COVID-19 has emphasized the health inequalities in Canada.
- Vulnerable populations, such as those with underlying medical conditions (chronic respiratory diseases, for example) experience further complications from the virus, and Indigenous people are already more likely than the general population to suffer from respiratory illnesses such as tuberculosis.
- COVID-19 has further highlighted the issues of inadequate and crowded housing, which play an important role in preventing the spread of the virus.
- There are increased rates of gender-based violence and abuse (20-30% in some areas in Canada), with lockdown measures making the situation worse for many Indigenous women in abusive relationships, as they can no longer leave the home to report cases of domestic violence.
- In Canada, 92 women and girls were killed in the first six months of 2021 compared to 78 during the same period in 2020 and 60 during the same period in 2019 across the country.
- A Statistics Canada study outlining the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of Indigenous people demonstrated that six out of 10 Indigenous participants said their mental health had worsened since the onset of the pandemic.
- Indigenous women report higher rates of mental health issues compared to Indigenous men (64% and 54%, respectively).
- The federal government has distributed hand sanitizer, N95 masks, and other medical gear to Indigenous communities, and Indigenous Services Canada has deployed 595 nurses and 392 paramedics to First Nations communities.
- The federal government also announced an additional \$270 million increase in funding to the On-reserve Income Assistance program and provided an additional \$1 billion to target housing, learning, childcare, and investments in long-term care to protect Elders.
- As of December 23, Indigenous communities made up 0.97% of active COVID-19 cases in Canada. There were a reported 561 deaths due to COVID-19 in Indigenous communities, making up a total of 1.86% of COVID-19-related deaths in Canada.
- Public health agencies in Canada have currently provided approximately 979,000 doses of vaccines to Indigenous communities, of which 379,000 were second doses and 74,000 were third doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines.

We are now into a new year. I have been reflecting on resolutions, and my thoughts are that perhaps we should look to our ways. Think about making changes that will “stick.” Let’s truly enjoy what we have. This is where joy comes from. I realize even more how my own family is my foundation and rock.

Let’s show acts of kindness, give out our energy and rekindle our spirit through love. Wishing everyone the best in the new year.


President Lorraine Whitman
 [@LWhitman_NWAC](https://twitter.com/LWhitman_NWAC)



My January Agenda

New Years Day

Interview with CARE re COVID in Indigenous Communities - Atlanta Global Innovation Interview



Indigenous communities around the world are the most vulnerable to contracting viruses. Issues of malnutrition, a lack of clean water and inadequate healthcare create Indigenous health issues exacerbate the vulnerabilities. The COVID-related deaths of Elders in Indigenous communities around the world represent further cultural loss and COVID-19 has emphasized the health inequalities in Canada. Vulnerable populations, such as those with underlying medical conditions (ie. Chronic respiratory diseases) experience further complications from the virus. Indigenous are already more likely that the general population to suffer from respiratory illnesses such as tuberculosis.

Interview with Canadian Press on Indigenous Languages:

We are pleased that UNESCO has declared 2022 to 2032 to be the decade of Indigenous languages.

- We hope this spotlight will not only be used to help preserve the languages that are in danger of dying out but will also help the people of the world understand the important role that these languages play in cultural diversity.
- Languages are the primary means through which all Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse people can access their cultural teachings and reclaim their stories, meanings and places. Everyone has the right to express themselves and to communicate in ways that uphold their identity and integrity.
- Indigenous languages in Canada are characterized through 12 overarching



language families Michif, 10 First Nations and Inuit. Language families include Algonquian languages, Inuit languages, Athapaskan languages, Siouan languages, Salish languages, Tsimshian languages, Wakashan languages, Iroquoian languages, Michif, Tlingit, Kutenai and Haida.

- According to UNESCO Atlas of the World's Language in Danger, 32 Indigenous languages are critically endangered, 24 are severely endangered, 6 are definitely endangered and 22 are vulnerable.

- Of the 70 Indigenous languages spoken in Canada, more than two thirds are in danger of disappearing.

- I am pleased that, just last October, my home province of Nova Scotia said it will recognize Mi'Kmaq as the province's first language. We look forward to that becoming official through legislation.

- I have spent some time learning Mi'Kmaq because I understand how important it is to the preservation of my culture and my community.

- The transfer of languages from one generation to another has been severely impacted by colonization.

- The Final Report of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry concluded that targeted elimination of Indigenous languages was one-way colonial structures attempted to end Indigenous culture in Canada.

- On June 21, 2019 the Indigenous Languages Act received Royal Assent. However, the Act did not make Indigenous languages official languages nor did the Act recognize the importance of Indigenous women in the transfer of Indigenous languages to future generations.

- In 2018, the Native Women's Association of Canada completed a report on Indigenous language preservation and revitalization informed by Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse people. It made three recommendations:

1. Invest in better training for Indigenous language students and teachers to ensure more reliable and accessible services are available, and ensure no additional languages are lost.
2. Empower Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse people by educating families and communities on the benefits of early age language development.
3. Implement cultural, traditional and holistic language services with an Indigenous and gendered lens across all educational domains.

Meeting with Minister Marc Miller, Crown Indigenous

It was nice to meet with our new Minister of Crown Indigenous, Minister Miller. There were some concerns and we built a rapport, a positive restart with this department and the Ministers there.

Indigenous Education Advisory Council Meeting

Working towards Reconciliation of bringing our artifacts back to territories back to where they should be, the Residential School survivors and the importance that the elders have in the Indigenous communities and importance of language in the community.

Zoom Speaking Event for University of Brandon, Manitoba

Met with the Velvet Maude in discussion of NWAC and personal level and communication, reinforcement of education in their fields of choice. The focus was empowerment and identity in their Indigenous backgrounds making their dreams a reality.

Executive Council Meeting

Preparation for Executive Council Meeting for dates that meet at executive board for meetings held Feb 1st.



Lorraine Whitman @L... · 2022-01-10 ...
My sincerest congratulations [@DeliahBernard](#) on her new role as Indigenous Advisor in the PM office! Best in the new year!



Deliah Bernard @... · 2021-12-17
Some exciting professional news before we all take time to rest over the holidays:

I'm excited to share that I've accept...
[Show this thread](#)



Lorraine Whitman @L... · 2022-01-04 ...
We must remain vigilant as COVID is still here. This morn I had to make my way to the community for testing. It's not fun or pretty but I need to protect my loved ones & feel I must do what is necessary to keep them & myself safe. Let's all do our part to keep safe! [#COVID](#) [#NS](#)



Lorraine Whitman @L... · 2022-01-25 ...
From op-eds in major newspapers, to radio & television interviews— our message last year was clear: [#Indigenous](#) women, girls, & gender-diverse people need to reclaim their place, power, & identity. Here is our Annual Report via [@NWAC_CA](#)





Lorraine Whitman @L... · 2022-01-12 ...
Revitalizing Indigenous languages should be a key plank of Canada's reconciliation efforts following policies designed to erase languages. Speaking Indigenous languages was banned in residential schools. It is a right for Indigenous people to be understood in their own land.

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Lorraine Whitman @L... · 2022-01-12 ...
The United Nations has declared an International Decade of Indigenous Languages, to begin this year.



Lorraine Whitman @L... · 2022-01-10 ...
Indian Island is one of four [#Indigenous](#) communities named in the Regional Perspectives report that's dealing with threats from climate change. The small Mi'kmaw community in New Brunswick built a rock wall to limit the harms of storm surges. 1/2

1 1 3



Lorraine Whitman @L... · 2022-01-10 ...
Historically Mi'kmaq moved seasonally and, if faced with increased flood risk, would have moved inland. But the reserve system forced them to stay put. 2/2



Lorraine Whitman @L... · 2022-01-17 ...
Today I have the privilege of speaking to students virtually at [@BrandonUni](#) . It is always a pleasure to see new faces and encourage youth in pursuing their dreams. [#MotivationMonday](#)



Lorraine Whitman @L... · 2022-01-06 ...
Our congratulations from [@NWAC_CA](#) to a well-deserved recipient Lillian Dyck, in receiving the [#OrderofCanada](#)! We thank you for your contributions & your advocacy w/ the [#Indigenous](#) community you are well deserving of this award.



[cbc.ca](#)
Former Senator Lillian Dyck says receiving the Order of Canada is 'e...



Native Women's
Association of Canada



L'Association des
femmes autochtones
du Canada

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