

The Indigenous Women in Leadership  
*Cultural Gala & Conference*  
OTTAWA 2017







# INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

An initiative by the Native Women's  
Association of Canada



Native Women's  
Association of Canada



L'Association des  
femmes autochtones  
du Canada



# Introduction

November 28th and 29th, 2017 Indigenous women, community members, and stakeholders gathered at Ottawa's Infinity Centre on the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation, to attend The Indigenous Women's Leadership Conference. Hosted by the Native Women's Association of Canada, the 2-day event showcased and celebrated the leadership and entrepreneurial achievement of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women from across the Nation.





# Opening Evening: Cultural Exchange

The opening evening's Cultural Exchange immersed guests in Indigenous culture, showcasing food, music, and fashion, as attendees got acquainted while sampling from the assortment of Indigenous inspired appetizers and sparkling punch. Indigenous women proudly dressed in traditional regalia were among the crowd, joined by Indigenous women delegates from Mexico, who attended garbed in their own traditional dress.

Guests were greeted by a sign welcoming them in French, English, and Inuktitut, featuring the conference's logo, which was created by an Indigenous woman graphic designer. The logo's colours and themes were reflected across the Infinity Centre through the décor and lighting, creating a contemporary and elegant atmosphere.

Participants were invited into the main hall, where Elder Mae Louise Campbell offered a blessing for the evening's feast. She shared that her whole life's work has been to empower women, and that seeing so many Indigenous women leaders gave her hope. Emcee Jessica Dumas the owner and founder of Prime Image Life Coaching, then invited guests to enjoy dinner and entertainment, with a main stage towards the front and a central raised platform kitchen at the centre of the dining tables. On this centre platform, Indigenous culinary students from Algonquin College worked with the Infinity Centre's Executive Chef in a live kitchen theatre experience, preparing an assortment of Indigenous inspired dishes.

"Nothing in our world will change, nothing in our country will change, nothing in our provinces will change, until the Indigenous women are healed and take back their rightful place back in the communities."

- Elder

*Mae Louise Campbell*





# Indigenous Women's Fashion Show

As guests began their meals, the entertainment kicked off with the Indigenous Women's Fashion Show, coordinated by youth-led Indigenous community organization Un1ty Entertainment. Indigenous models sported handmade jewelry by Kelly Nahwegahbow, who contributed jewelry to accent each designer's apparel. Models began their circuit at the front of the stage, before beginning a tour of the room effectively ensuring a fantastic view for all.

On display was apparel from designer Roberta Anderson, including a collection of beautiful evening gowns and ready to wear fashions. Roberta is well known for her beautifully beaded mukluks sold through Manitoba Mukluks. She will be participating in 2018's New York Fashion Week.

The show next featured Winter Gear, by designer Winter Doxtator. Among her collection of versatile ready to wear fashions included bright eye-catching colours and patterns, and Indigenous imagery.

Next up was the work of Mohawk fashion designer and entrepreneur Tammy Beauvais, whose designs are known and have been

worn around the globe. Her designs have been worn by high profile figures such as Sophie Gregoire-Trudeau, Michelle Obama, and Robert DeNiro.

Inuk designer, artist, and professor Martha Kayak's brand InukChic, were modelled by some of her own students from Nunavut Sivuniksavut (NS) School in Ottawa. Her collection included stunning parkas and outerwear, and beautiful handmade sealskin pieces.

The fashion show ended with the design debut from young Mohawk hip-hop artist LB, who designed her line to inspire young Indigenous women and girls who are in vulnerable environments, reminding them that they are special and have a place. She took to the stage, thanking everyone in her Mohawk language, the performing LB performed a moving song about Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, as young Indigenous women models walked across the room, wearing red paint on their faces to show that they are warriors, and as a call out to help their sisters.







## Music and Dance

The evening continued with a lineup of extraordinary musicians and dancers. Multi-award winning and Juno award nominee singer/songwriter Tracy Bone from the Keeseekoowenin Ojibway First Nation in southwestern Manitoba began her set with the title track from her latest album, "Woman in Red", a song about forgiveness and healing as the path to moving ahead after the legacy of Residential Schools.

Winnipeg's Aboriginal School of Dance showcased a diverse array of dance styles and choreography, opening with an emotional modern choreography before segueing into more energetic and upbeat South American dance. The entertainment became interactive as dancers invited audience members up to join them on stage, joining in with the fun

and lively dancing. First Nations dancers dressed in regalia performed traditional Pow Wow dances, including a dancer in a jingle dress, and a performance of the Eagle Dance. Their showcase closed off with an athletic hoop dancer, who then began a modern choreography to Beyoncé's song, "Run the World".

The next artist was Riit, born (Rita Claire Mike-Murphy), a top Inuk youth raised in Panniqtuq, Nunavut, who released her self-titled album in 2017. She began with a moving song written for her father, who had passed away 3 years prior. Riit's songs are introspective, with a beautiful mix of guitar, lyrics, and throat singing.



Local Métis Mohawk musician and visual artist River Doucette shared her original song “Earth”, her second original song for flute, in an experimental music style fusing multiple genres. Her concurrent beatboxing and flute playing created a mesmerizing effect unlike any other.

Next, the Indigenous music group Silla, comprised of duo Charlotte Qamaniq & Cynthia Pitsiulak, performed traditional Inuit throat singing to the delight of the audience.

Finally, the night’s festivities concluded with a performance by the award-winning singer-songwriter Iskwé, whose stage name is a short-form of her traditional Cree name Waseskwan Iskwew. She began her set with



a stripped down acoustic version of her song “Soldier”, which spoke of a conflict between two people and places, seeing both sides of the struggle between water protectors and the people working on pipelines and in oil fields, and the importance of having kindness in our hearts for everybody. Iskwé’s next song entitled “Nobody Knows”, was written for Tina Fontaine, one of the thousands of Indigenous women and girls who have gone missing or been murdered. As she sang, she was joined by an Indigenous woman drummer from the audience, who was moved to lend the sound of her drum to the performance. She closed off her set, bringing up the volume and energy with her powerful new song “The Unforgotten”. The song included a sing-along chorus, an Ojibway call for the spirits to come and sing-along with everyone.

“One of the themes we are here to celebrate is economic development. Together we carry a sacred inheritance. We need to continue to support each other.”

- Francyne D. Joe,  
NWAC President



# Day 2 *Conference*



As guests arrived the morning of the conference and completed registration, they were welcomed with a hot breakfast buffet prior to the opening ceremony. Throughout the conference, guests were offered an assortment of refreshments, and health breaks interspersed the scheduled panels, giving guests additional opportunities to mingle.

Emcee Jessica Dumas welcomed guests, opening the day with an acknowledgement of the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation, before then acknowledging the Ministers in attendance, and the international delegates from Mexico, Peru, Bolivia, Columbia, Guatemala, USA, and Australia, as well as the Indigenous women trailblazers from all across Canada.

Elder Susan Avingaq performed an opening prayer in Inuktitut and lit the ceremonial Qulliq. Rebecca Kudloo, the President of Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada explained that the Qulliq was traditionally used by women for heating, cooking, and drying clothing, traditionally oil came from seal, and has carried the Inuit over hundreds of years to this day.

Elder Roseanne Martin came forward representing Listuguj First Nation and offered an opening prayer in her traditional language, before explaining that she had offered the Seven Directional Prayer taught to her many years ago. She then shared the Mi'kmaq Honour Song, singing in time with her drum.

Finally, Elder Jo MacQuarrie, Métis of Cree and French heritage who works with the Métis Nation of Ontario, offered a third opening prayer, thanking the Creator, the Spirits of their ancestors for being with them today, as well as thanking the Algonquin Nation for their hospitality while meeting on their land.





# Welcoming Remarks

Executive Director of the Native Women's Association of Canada Lynne Groulx offered words of welcome, in English, French, and Spanish. After acknowledging traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation, she thanked the Elders, Indigenous women trailblazers, and leaders who were in attendance, especially the youth leaders of the next generation.

Rebecca Kudloo, President of Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada began her welcoming remarks by commenting on the remarkable talent present in the room, and the honourable Indigenous women present. She recognized the Inuit in the room, particularly Elder Susan Avingaq and Madeline Ivalu, for their contributions to filmmaking in the Inuit language, before reflecting on the unique and distinct needs of Inuit, First Nations, and Métis women in their own right.

Melanie Omeniho, President of Women of the Métis Nation, took the stage, thanking the

Elders for the opening prayer, thanking NWAC President Francyne Joe for the invitation of the Conference, and acknowledging the presence of Pauktuutit President Rebecca Kudloo with whom she has often worked with. She shared her desire to honour and appreciate the presence of the Métis women in attendance, and the trailblazers they have been since the onset of Canada.

Finally, NWAC President Francyne Joe again acknowledged their presence on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation. Thanking the Elders, Indigenous women, leaders, and dignitaries in attendance, President Joe expressed gratitude of the opportunity as NWAC President to meet so many Indigenous women across Canada.

"Singing is our highest form of prayer."

- Conference Participant





## Remarks from the Honourable Minister *Carolyn Bennett*

The Honourable Minister Carolyn Bennett was next to offer opening remarks. Minister Bennett extended greetings to the delegates from Mexico, who would be attending the Tri-Lateral Meetings between the United States, Canada, and Mexico on Violence against Indigenous Women. She acknowledged the traditional unceded Territory of the Algonquin people, she expressed gratitude for the Elders who opening the meeting, commenting on the importance of honouring the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people. During her speech, she shared a quote by Nellie Counoyea from the 1975 Status of Women booklet *Speaking Together*, “Paternalism has been a total failure”. She stated paternalism will be broken only when the voices of women, youth, and Elders are heard in the structures of power. Healing will take place when women’s voices are heard at the political level.

Minister Bennett spoke on the dissolution of INAC and creation of the department of Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, and the Department of Indigenous Services. Laughter broke out among the audience as she joked that the people who worked at INAC had a terrible burden; that they worked at INAC. Taking a serious note, she expressed her pleasure at the decision to dissolve INAC and create two new departments, and the eventual goal for the department to disappear altogether, with services delivered by Indigenous governments and Institutions.





## Remarks from the Honourable Minister *Maryam Monsef*

The Honourable Minister Maryam Monsef of Status of Women Canada was next to offer greetings. After recognizing the traditional territory of the Algonquin people, Minister Monsef asked to get to know the people in the audience, asking them to share one thing that they are proud of, an accomplishment that people should know about, something that is making a difference. She walked through the audience, handing the microphone off to Indigenous women who shared their accomplishments with the room. One Indigenous woman from Saskatchewan founded a medical daycare for children with medical needs, Hope's Home, which has served over 500 families in their community, and employs over 200 people. Another woman from the Métis Nation in BC runs a program called Bridges for Women Society serving Indigenous women on and off reserve who are impacted by trauma. Offering trauma-informed healing, employment, self-employment, and post-secondary education, the program serves

over 700 Indigenous women a year. Minister Monsef commented on the importance of hearing the stories of Indigenous women leaders so that newcomers to Canada like herself may understand the contributions and resiliency of the women whose land we are on, and so that the next generation of leaders must also be reminded of the strength, creativity and resourcefulness both in their blood and in their traditions. She announced 5 million dollars of funding to support Indigenous women's leadership through Status of Women Canada. Minister Monsef brought her time to a close expressing hope that the Indigenous women present would tell their stories to uplift and inspire, and that the Government of Canada is with them as a partner and is committed to walking this path with them, as all of Canada benefits from nurturing and inspiring Indigenous women leaders.





# Conference Panels

The rest of the conference featured a series of panels highlighting Indigenous women leaders. Simultaneous translation services were available in both French and Inuktitut.

Panels were moderated by Cheryl McKenzie, a Canadian broadcast journalist, host, and producer of Anishinabek and Cree descent best known as the host of the Aboriginal People's Television Network's half-hour nightly news show APTN National News, and the talk show InFocus.

Tiaré Lani Kela Jung, a graphic recorder with the agency Drawing Change, was on hand to capture the panels' themes. Tiaré drew live as the conversations unfolded, capturing stories in a visual format. Her illustrations were moved to the lobby as they were completed, where guests were

able to reflect and discuss the images and stories they represent. She shared that to her, graphic recording is about storytelling, that storytelling is part of a healing journey, understanding one another, and building a strong foundation for collaboration.

*"Women's economic security and economic independence is a key for breaking the cycle of violence."*

*- Victoria Pruden,  
Métis Nation of British  
Columbia*





## Panel 1: Indigenous Women in Business

The first panel featured Destiny Seymour, the founder of Indigo Arrows, former APTN anchor and founder of Satya Organic Skin Care, Patrice Mousseau, as well as Christa Bruneau-Guenther, owner and founder of Feast Bistro Café.

“Indigenous women in business can do business on our own terms.”

-*Panelist*

Patrice explained how her infant daughter had suffered from severe eczema, and after researching traditional treatments, she created a non-toxic anti-inflammatory in her kitchen, which cleared her daughter's condition in two days. After offering to share the extra product on Facebook and receiving an overwhelming influx of requests, she obtained USDA organic certification for her product and submitted it to Health Canada along with her research. After receiving approval from Health Canada, her product is now on the shelves of over 600 stores across Canada. Patrice shared that as women, they make things happen because they have to, they do it for their children, they have very little to work with, but make it happen. She shared that it's not about the money, it's about trying to make a change.



Destiny then spoke of how she was inspired to start her business as an interior designer. While working at the architectural firm where she had begun her career, she struggled to find materials and finishes which respectfully reflected the local Indigenous culture. She taught herself to make textiles, inspired by Indigenous pottery and patterns, some of which were over 3000 years old. Having now left the firm to start her own business, Destiny's biggest challenge is now keeping up with demand as her business thrives. Christa shared her decision to open her own restaurant in a challenging market. She shared that it had never been her dream to open a restaurant, but she had always had a passion for traditional foods. Christa had owned a daycare, and developed a holistic grassroots food program, involving the children in cooking and gardening. After incorporating the traditional foods into the program, and after seeing the power of reconnecting to traditional foods, she began offering cooking lessons to mothers.



Eventually, she was offered the opportunity to open a restaurant, and discovered there were only four Indigenous restaurants open in Canada.

The panellists went on to discuss the importance of celebrating the land and their culture and recreating the business space to better their communities. They shared that Indigenous women are much more inclusive in business, involving the perspectives of Elders and children, inherently knowing that everyone should have a voice.



# Panel 2: Arts and Culture



"The spirit of creativity  
is in each and  
everyone of us."

-Elder

*Mae Louise  
Campbell*

The second panel featured musician Tracy Bone, multi-award winning singer/songwriter from the Keeseekoowenin Ojibway First Nation, Dawn Oman, a self-taught First Nations Artist, born in Yellowknife, and owner of Dawn Oman Designs, Elder Mae Louise Campbell, founder of Grandmother Moon Lodge, and Melaw Nakehk'ó, actress, artist, traditional, moose hide tanner, and co-founder of the First Nations organization Dene Nahjo.



The panellists each contribute to art and culture in their own unique way, inspiring other women to follow in their footsteps. Mae Louise and her daughter were one of the first Indigenous people to have an Indigenous art gallery 35 years ago. She realized her art was all centred around women, the spirit of creativity is in each and every one of the Indigenous people. Through that period of time her art led her to the realization that to heal as an Indigenous woman, she had to go back to the land. She founded Grandmother Moon Lodge on 40 acres of land, bringing other women to the land knowing that it is what they too need to heal. They operated the spiritual retreat for 18 years, as women came from the four directions. While that lodge closed, they are now in the process of building another lodge, an announcement which prompted applause throughout the hall.

Dawn described growing up in Yellowknife in foster homes being inspired by community Elders and the colours in their beadwork. She was inspired by the handiwork of the community women, which set her on the path of loving art and design.

Tracy shared that as a child she used music as a way to be noticed, and that her artistry has developed into who she really is. She started singing as an escape, seeing the church choir as a place where she could express herself.

Melaw spoke on the obstacles she has overcome, describing her journey leaving an abusive relationship and returning to her hometown. She continued her art, painting, sewing, and making moccasins and purses from moose hide. She had inherited her grandmother's tools and decided to tan her

own moose hide. All of her family had gone to residential school, and the knowledge of tanning hides had been lost, so she went out and asked the Elders in her own community and other communities to help her. She travelled across communities talking to Elders, developing relationships and showing that she was able to receive the stories and knowledge which go along with the process of moose hide tanning.

Elder Mae Louise spoke of having five children and leaving an abusive situation. She described her greatest challenge was the journey within herself, that a challenge for women is finding and discovering who they really are, that the traditional ways are the opposite of what society now tells women they should be. She shared that secrets make us sick and that Indigenous women they are not the pain, suffering, that no matter what happens in their lives Indigenous women are strong, beautiful, and courageous.

The panel continued as they described their journeys, sharing lessons learned, obstacles they had overcome, and sharing their knowledge with children and others. Tracy closed by sharing a lesson she has learned, that there is no such thing as coincidence, and we must take what is brought to us as lessons. Dawn agreed, adding the advice to follow your heart, know who you are, pursue your dream and you will get there. Mae Louise added that this is women's time, and it is very important to pay attention to it, that it will be Indigenous women who will lead the way. Finally, Melaw shared that the building of the relationship to the land, and ensuring that the land heals, are some of the most important lessons she learned from her Elders.



## Panel 3: Communications and Media

The last panel of the morning was a discussion on communications and media with Tina Keeper, Cree activist, producer, actress, former member of the Canadian House of Commons and President of Kistikan Pictures; Coleen Rajotte, a Cree and Métis award winning director/producer and owner of Rajotte Productions; Elder Madeline Ivalu, a Canadian Inuk filmmaker, actor, and one of the co-founders of Arnait Video Productions; and finally, Elder Susan Avingaq, a filmmaker and participant in Arnait projects since its inception in 1991. Madeline and Susan both spoke Inuktitut, which was translated in real-time to the audience.



Susan explained that she got into the business of filmmaking in 1992, when people came to her community to meet with the Inuit women to talk about filmmaking. She shared that Inuit women were suppressed at that point, and the people who attended the meeting told them they were capable and could accomplish as much as men. With the support of her husband, she entered the film industry, one of the few women working there at the time. Even though they faced obstacles while filming, continued striving and moving forward.

Madeline recalled that as a child she had been taught by her mother to hide their

traditional ways from the settlers. When people came to the Ivaluuk meeting to talk about filmmaking, she was not initially interested in acting. She took part in filming and directing, learning how to operate the camera. In spite of difficulties while filming, they learned from them and moved forward. Laughing, she shared that the hardest part of acting had been learning to cry, but now would be able to cry if they asked to right then and there.

Coleen began by sharing a story from her childhood in Winnipeg, where she grew up without seeing people who looked like her on the news and wanted to tell and share

stories about her people. When she was 21 she saw an ad for an internship at CBC. She applied and got an interview, studying all the major news stories of the day to prepare, and got the job. Coleen shared her message to all young people, that if they have a job interview they should just go in there and go for it.

Tina moved to the city from a reserve when she was five years old. Her mother later shared that they moved to the city for fear that she would be taken away, as she had been the first wave of children taken to residential schools. Growing up in Winnipeg, Tina got involved in the local Friendship Centre's theatre group and became part of a community effort to explore their own stories.

The panellists went on to share challenges they have overcome. They spoke of pursuing dreams, learning from challenges, applying self-discipline and reclaiming culture. Tina spoke of battling anxieties each time she moves into a new arena, and that Susan and Madeline remind her of how strong their ancestors are, and of the strength of Indigenous women. Madeline added that in the past their traditional way of life was suppressed and assimilated, but they are now reclaiming and relearning their culture. Madeline finished by saying that now is the time to learn from our Elders. Susan spoke further about overcoming obstacles, ending the panel by saying that looking around the room she sees unbelievable women and that she believes in their capabilities.





"Drudgery is the grey angel of success."

-Tina Keeper,  
Film Maker



## Networking Lunch

Prior to breaking for the hot buffet lunch, Madeleine and Susan closed off the morning session by sharing a song, sitting together on the couch as they sang in Inuktitut. Elder Bernice Hammersmith then came forward to offer a blessing for the lunch. She spoke in Michif, the language of the Métis and spoken by all the people in her community, before translating into English. She shared that the Métis are being forgotten, including in the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, and in recognition as survivors of residential schools. They have a language and are a nation of people, and she asked those in the room to pray for the Métis.





## Panel 4: Youth Leadership

After lunch, the conference reconvened with a panel featuring youth advocate Nikki Fraser the Regional Youth Representative for the West at the Native Women's Association of Canada, Sky Durocher, a Métis Youth Leader, and political advocate and President of the National Inuit Youth Council Maatalii Okalik.



The panellists shared their motivations and what got them started in their chosen fields. Nikki began her work to uplift and work for her people when she became a mother and wants her children to grow up in a world where they can be celebrated as Indigenous people.

Maatalii, an Inuk woman from Nunavut, began speaking in Inuktitut before switching to English. She explained that from a young age she felt that she never had a choice. She saw those she loved being treated differently because of their identities but also saw how beautiful her culture was and how they could have a bright future. In reflecting on the history of residential schools and the forced relocation of the Inuit into the 53 communities in which they live today, she realized that the Inuit do not live the quality of life they should have as Canadian citizens.

Sky recounted being pushed into youth leadership by an organization that came into her community for four months each year offering sports and art. She questioned why there were no Indigenous people coming into their communities to teach them, and

once old enough applied to teach through the program. She wanted to become the Métis mentor she had craved as a child, leading by example, and hoping the youth she mentors will become strong leaders.

The panel continued with a discussion of challenges they had overcome, including the struggle to believe in themselves and to reject stereotypes. Nikki described believing in yourself as a tiny seed, which is planted and fed by good thoughts, and grows. They shared lessons learned, and Maatalii stressed the importance of questioning the status quo. In university, she realized that her Canadian peers did not realize that we are still living in a colonial society and so switched her degree to Human Rights and Political Science with a minor in Indigenous Studies. Her vision has always been to further the interests of Inuit in Canada. Sky shared how her community and the desire to make them proud is her motivation, as they have watched her grow up and become the person she is today. They spoke further on reconciliation and decolonization. Nikki explained her view that reconciliation starts with ending lateral violence.



“Women’s economic security and economic independence is a key for breaking the cycle of violence.”

- *Victoria Pruden,*  
Métis Nation of  
British Columbia

# Panel 5: Entrepreneur/Professional

The Entrepreneur and Professional panel brought together Indigenous women from diverse fields, including fashion, dance, and employment.



Brenda LaRose is an Anishinaabe Métis woman and partner at Leaders & Co. Executive Search. Brenda had previously worked for a firm that wouldn't invest in Indigenous leadership, but the office was filled with Indigenous people. Brenda saw that no one was tapping into the Indigenous talent in Winnipeg and that there was a need to specialize in placing clients from diverse backgrounds. She started the initiative on her own time, and it soon became a success. Brenda started her own home-based firm in 1999, and since has established a strong national brand in the Indigenous community.

Jessica Dumas is the owner and founder of Prime Image Life Coaching. Jessica has a passion for personal and professional development coaching and in motivating others to reach their higher potential through natural gifts and personal vision. After her brother was killed by police in 2005, Jessica chose to become an advocate to promote the understanding of current and historical matters in the Indigenous community.

Tammy Beauvais is the owner of Tammy Beauvais Designs, a 100% Indigenous owned and Socially Responsible Business. A fourth-generation artisan, Tammy was inspired by her sister and Mohawk community, and began designing Indigenous inspired clothing when she was 13 years old.

Sadie Vincent-Wolfe, an Inuk baker and business owner, will soon be opening a bakery in Iqaluit, providing unique, handmade cakes for special occasions. She loved to bake and had begun baking cakes for clients in her community. Popularity spread through word of mouth, but baking took up a lot of time and space, and her husband wanted the room to make dinner. She told him, "build me a bakery" and he did. Her bakery will soon be opening in Iqaluit. Sadie advises women that they are going to face hurdles in business and that they may not think they have the strength and resources to overcome, but they do and will.

Buffy Handle, an award-winning entrepreneur, artist, choreographer, designer, athlete, educator, and speaker, is the owner of the Aboriginal School of Dance. Buffy shared that she had wanted to create opportunities to be leaders now, and so started her dance school.

The five women spoke at length about the importance of seeking mentorship, advising that people like to help, and that women should look for the gift in the struggle. They stressed the importance of acting on what you believe in and coming from authenticity.





“Indigenous women in business can do business on our own terms.”

*-Panelist*

# Panel 6: Advocacy and Law

Jean Teillet is a partner at Pape Salter Teillet LLP, a specialist in Aboriginal rights law, and great-grandniece of famed Métis leader Louis Riel. Jean won a landmark victory in the Supreme Court of Canada for Métis rights, helped create the Métis Nation of Ontario and has served as vice president and treasurer of the Indigenous Bar Association of Canada, and founding president of the Métis Nation Lawyers Association.



Koren Lightning-Ear is a Blue Thunderbird Woman and a Cree from Samson Cree Nation. She holds a BA and LLB, is Vice-President of Kasohkowew Child Wellness Society, Board Member for First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, and the sole practitioner at Thunderbird Law in her home community.

Violet Ford of Inukshuk Law is both the first woman of Indigenous ancestry in Newfoundland and Labrador and the first Inuk woman in Canada to become a lawyer. A well-respected advisor on international law, Violet assisted in drafting the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

Alyssa Flaherty-Spence, a legal advocate of Inuit and Cree descent, is currently completing her 10-month Law Society of Upper Canada Articling Program with Dubuc-Osland Barristers and Solicitors where they focus on Inuit and First Nations Economic Development.

Throughout the panel the women shared profound insights as well as the challenges they had faced on their journeys. Work in advocacy and law takes an emotional toll. People who are incarcerated need support, they come to court because they have a hurt so big they cannot solve it themselves.



## Panel 7: Policy and Politics

The final panel included three Indigenous women leaders and decision makers including Sheila North Wilson, Grand Chief of Manitoba Keewati-nowi Okimakanak.

One of Sheila's passions is working with the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities to raise awareness about the national tragedy of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW). She described starting her career as a reporter and realizing she wanted to be the person with the voice rather than the one asking the questions. Also in attendance was Loretta Ross, a member of the Hollow Water First Nation in Manitoba, and current Treaty Relations Commissioner of Manitoba. Loretta is the first female Treaty Commissioner within the Numbered Treaties in Canada and was taught by her Grandfather that as a First Nations person she would always carry the responsibility of advocating and educating on behalf of First Nation people. The final panellist was Monica Ell-Kanayuk, Former Deputy Premier of Nunavut. Like Sheila, Monica previously worked in journalism, having been a director of the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation prior to her election.

Each an impressive leaders in their own right, the women spoke about the importance of not letting anyone tell you can't, sharing that it is important to relearn Indigenous values, rather than measuring ourselves by colonial standards.





“The spirit of  
creativity is  
in each and  
everyone of us.”

-Elder  
*Mae Louise  
Campbell*



# *Closing Ceremony*

With the conclusion of the Policy and Politics Panel, the conference began its closing ceremony. All three Elders once again offered prayers, and Elder Susan Avingaq extinguished the Quilliq. Participants left the conference with a greater appreciation for the accomplishments and capabilities of Indigenous women across Turtle Island.





Tiaré Jung  
Drawing Change



# INDIGENOUS WOMEN in BUSINESS

Destiny Seymour  
INDIGO ARROWS  
 Patrice MoussePa  
SATYA ORGANIC SKIN CARE  
 Christa Bruneau Guenther  
FEAST BISTRO CAFE

We make things **HAPPEN**  
because we have to...

organic treatment  
 indigenous  
 indigenous restaurant  
**for our KIDS**  
 Only 4 indigenous restaurants...  
 Lets celebrate this land & this culture

Not just men in business suits

**RE-creating the Business Space**

- to better our **Communities**
- Center our **Integrity**
- Include more **diverse Voices**

grounded in our  
**Connection to LAND & Life**

Tiaré Jung  
Drawing Change

# ARTS & Culture

TRACY BONE  
Tracy Bone Music

MELAW NAKEHK'O  
Actress

DAWN OMAN  
Dawn Oman Designs

MAE LOUISE CAMPBELL  
Grandmother Moon Lodge

RIIT STRICKLAND  
Musician

you couldn't find Ceremony or cultural practice...  
We were in *hiding*  
Secrets make you sick  
**Healing**

Learning who I am  
What I want...

Living through violence breeds disconnection

I used Music as a way To BE NOTICED  
Escapism Somewhere I could Express myself



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS with elders

time... learn how to tan hides...



Self-taught artists have to make it without institutional support

BE ABLE TO **KNOW YOURSELF**  
You are not your Pain Suffering discrimination

take LESSONS from our struggles

my family went to residential School...

Tiafé Ju Drawing, Ch

# ENTREPRENEUR PROFESSIONAL

- BRENDA LA ROSE - Leaders, INC.
- JESSICA DUMAS - Indigenous Insights Inc.
- TAMMY BEAUVAIS - Tammy Beauvais Designs
- SADIE VINCENT-WOLFE
- BUFFY HANDLE - Abernethy School of Dance

I grew up a warrior



inspired by Anishinaabe Community MOHAWK FASHION

I wanted to make my own clothes



I worked for a firm that wouldn't invest in Indigenous Leadership

yet the office was filled by indigenous people...

I STARTED MY OWN FIRM



after my brother was killed by the police

I dreamed of being a high school counsellor

I couldn't stay at my corporate job



I love CAKE

my husband wanted space to make dinner

Build me a bakery he did

Be SMART & giving • Seek MENTORSHIP • look for the GIFT in the struggle

**HEALING**

STAY SILENT  
STAY SICK  
• abuse  
• poverty  
• addictions  
•••

**ACT**

on what you believe in  
• even when criticized  
• Come from authenticity

Am I a good MOM?



IT'S OK TO **CHOOSE MYSELF**  
Not selfish  
OK to say no

INVESTMENT

everyone has natural gifts

RICH DAD POOR DAD



Creating opportunities for youth to be Leaders now

making Cultural Contributions

Started a DANCE SCHOOL

overcoming crab-in-the-bucket mindset

**CREATE OPPORTUNITIES**



Tiafé Ju

# COMMUNICATIONS & MEDIA

telling OUR stories OUR way

Tina Keeper  
KSTIKAN PICTURES

Coleen Rajotte  
RAJOTTE PRODUCTIONS

Madeline Ivalu  
FILM MAKER

Susan Avingaq  
FILM MAKER

- not many women in film
- or inuk people
- Women's role: to please husband translated from Inuktitut

don't let the bastards get you down

- my mother told me don't show our tradition/ways to the white people

don't hang out with the white people



Move to the city so that we would not be taken from our mom

Joined Native Friendship Theatre



How do you turn this on?

have self discipline focus on YOUR WORK

Pursue Learning ask questions

they tried to assimilate our culture reclaim it!

WORK together across races



hardest part of acting: CRYING

Groundbreaking



Grew up watching white faces on the news...

I want to tell the stories of my PEOPLE



I was the first indigenous woman on !!! CBC ...

90 seconds to tell a story

& I left a dream job to pursue my DREAM



taking on a visible role facing myself Staying Sober

Tiare

# YOUTH Leadership

NIKKI FRASER  
Advocate

SKY DUROCHER  
Youth leader

MAATALII OKALIK  
Ministerial youth advisor

AUTUMN PELTIER  
Water protector

I became a MOM What motivates you?

from a young age I didn't have a

CHOICE

to have a voice & enable other youth to have a voice

as a Métis kid I wanted

Indigenous MENTORS



BELIEVE in yourself & what you have to offer



DON'T ACCEPT the structures!!! We're given ...

the time of forced assimilation ... Challenge to access Language & Culture HUMAN RIGHT

youth rebuilding what was taken from parent's generation

we're a kind & forgiving people Keep getting burned honour the TREATIES GOV'T

I lost my father I was in a racist, white dominant school I dropped out ... to save my life

starts with OUR PEOPLE RECONCILIATION ending lateral violence

Tiare Jur Drawing Ch

JEAN TEILLET  
Pape Salter Teillet LLP

KOREN LIGHTNING-EARL  
Advocacy

# ADVOCACY & LAW

VIOLET FORD  
Inukshuk LAW

ALYSSA FLAHERTY-SPENCE



acting didn't have requirements  
Working with youth



winding path to PURPOSE



People come to Court because they have a HURT So big they cannot solve it themselves

Emotional court: attempt to find REASON

Hunting rights are about the RIGHT to BE ON THE LAND EXIST

CHALLENGES

SHUTTING my mouth to think

& my ANGER drives my passion & when to SPEAK TRUTH

EMOTIONAL TOLL

EDUCATING non-indigenous people on Indigenous law & ways of Being

you don't have to fit in Make a new SHAPE



# POLICY & POLITICS

SHEILA NORTH WILSON  
Grand Chief, Manitoba Keewatinowin Okimakanak  
LORETTA ROSS  
Treaty Relations Commissioner of Manitoba

MONICA ELL-KANAYUK  
Former Deputy Premier of Nunavut  
VIVIANE MICHEL  
President of Quebec Nation Women

I was a reporter  
be the person with the VOICE  
Rather than the one asking questions

you bring your people with you  
EDUCATE  
Others about your people

I was a journalist  
Banging my head on the GLASS CEILING  
taking on leadership role wasn't a calling it was an Compliment  
Responsibility

can't PLEASE everyone

we still MEASURE ourselves by colonial standards

work — Balance — Life

re-learn indigenous VALUES...

don't let anyone tell you you can't









INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S  
LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE



Native Women's  
Association of Canada

L'Association des  
femmes autochtones  
du Canada