

Cahiers **DIALOG**

Cahier n° 2007-04. Proceedings

ABORIGINAL WOMEN OF QUÉBEC AND CANADA: PATH TOWARD EQUALITY

Edited by Carole Lévesque and Marie France Labrecque

Montréal 2007

INRS
Université d'avant-garde

DIALOG

Réseau de recherche et de connaissances relatives aux peuples autochtones
Aboriginal Peoples Research and Knowledge Network
Red de investigación y de conocimientos relativos a los pueblos indígenas

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Title: *Aboriginal Women of Québec and Canada: Path Toward Equality*

Edited by Carole Lévesque and Marie France Labrecque

Publisher : Aboriginal Peoples Research and Knowledge Network (DIALOG) and Institut national de la recherche scientifique (INRS)

Place of publication : Montréal

Date : 2007

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Diffusion

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Funding Agencies

DIALOG – Le réseau de recherche et de connaissances relatives aux peuples autochtones/Aboriginal Peoples Research and Knowledge Network is funded by le Fonds québécois de recherche sur la société et la culture (FQRSC) and by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

Host University of DIALOG Network



ISBN : 978-2-89575-153-3

Legal deposit : 2007

Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec

Library and Archives Canada



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DIALOG — Aboriginal Peoples Research and Knowledge Network — is a space for innovative discussion and exchange between First Peoples and academia. DIALOG is designed to enhance research, facilitate the co-production of knowledge and foster the development of just, egalitarian and equitable social relations. DIALOG is an interuniversity, inter-institutional and international network created in 2001 and based at Institut national de la recherche scientifique (an academic branch of Université du Québec), Québec, Canada. Funded by the Fonds québécois de recherche sur la société et la culture and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, DIALOG brings together more than 150 people from various universities and Aboriginal organizations and communities. DIALOG works closely with many Aboriginal partners and universities.

DIALOG members come from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds, pursue varied practices and research interests, and share the common objective of advancing knowledge in view of a more egalitarian society and the full recognition of the cultures, rights, values and visions of the world of the First Peoples. Through its scientific activities, its programs in support of collaborative and community-partnered research, training and publishing, its knowledge mobilization initiatives, its dissemination mechanisms and its interactive data banks, DIALOG is contributing to the democratization of knowledge relating to the Aboriginal world on both the national and international levels. In today's knowledge society, DIALOG is helping to promote cultural diversity and the recognition of such to encourage the harmonious living together of diverse peoples. DIALOG's mandate is fourfold:

- **Fostering** constructive, innovative and lasting dialogue between the academic milieu and Aboriginal organizations and communities in order to revitalize and promote interactive and collaborative research.
- **Contributing** to a better understanding of the historical and contemporary social, economic, cultural and political realities of Aboriginal peoples and the dynamics of their relations with non-Aboriginal people by emphasizing the co-production of knowledge and by helping to make research and public policies more responsive to Aboriginal needs, approaches and perspectives.
- **Supporting** university students' training, guidance and supervision, particularly for Aboriginal students, by associating them with the network's activities and achievements and offering them financial assistance programs and excellence grants.
- **Increasing** the scientific and social impact of research relating to Aboriginal peoples by developing new knowledge tools in order to promote and disseminate research findings in Québec, Canada and worldwide.



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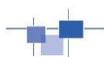
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Introduction

This collection of texts has come out of a colloquium organized by the DIALOG network and Quebec Native Women, held on February 22-24, 2005 in Montréal to commemorate the Quebec Native Women's Association's thirtieth anniversary. These texts are the transcriptions of talks given on that occasion, mostly by Aboriginal women but also by a few non-Aboriginal women who share the ideals of social justice and equality. The women, of different generations, are militants, intellectuals, negotiators, professionals, mothers and students. Some have played key roles in Native women's associations, others are intellectuals who are questioning the conceptual tools that have been used to deal with Aboriginal issues, or professionals or business women who serve as role models for the younger generation, and some have carried out their work relatively unseen; but whatever their involvement and their action, they have pursued and are still pursuing the same goal: achieving equality between men and women, while maintaining a respect for differences and diversity.

The texts indeed testify to the diversity of the paths taken by these women, some of whom have struggled for years to obtain justice; they sometimes describe their successes, and at other times their failures and disappointments. But in every case, their words reflect their tenacity and courage, to the point that several of these women represent examples for society at large and have been recognized as such at the highest levels of authority.

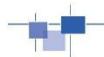
The situation of Aboriginal women in Canada and Québec is the outcome of an inner colonization more pernicious than the outward colonization experienced by the populations of most of the countries of Africa and Asia. Whereas, for women in those countries, their emancipation has been indissociable from the national struggle for freedom, here in Canada, Aboriginal women fighting for equality have been confronted to a large extent by public policies, laws and regulations. So their struggle must be simultaneously waged on several fronts: that is, on the institutional and organizational levels as well as on the personal level. They must combat historical, cultural and religious stagnation as they face economic, linguistic and even ideological divisions in both the dominant society and their own Aboriginal societies. The challenges are many, but the thirty years of existence of Quebec Native Women (QNW) testify to the fact that despite these differences, these women have been able to stand together and rally around the key issues that they face. And they have done so with tenacity, patience and serenity.

The challenges can be clearly seen in the main themes that marked the colloquium and that emerge from this collection. First among these challenges is obviously the famous Bill C-31, which amended the *Indian Act*, and which was in fact the reason for the creation of the Native Women's Association of Canada and Quebec. This is a question that, although it affects all of Canada's Native peoples, has a particular impact on Aboriginal women in that they have been hardest hit by the injustice and even racism that the dominant society has shown toward Aboriginal peoples; courageously, they have also challenged the Aboriginal men who were submitted to the *Indian Act* about their misogyny, at the risk of being permanently exiled from their communities of origin—which did in fact happen to some of these women.

The texts focus on other issues of recognition and social justice as well, and themes such as democracy, governance, identity, culture, education and health. In the current context, it is no surprise that they also deal with areas such as the environment, land and the economy. Without their authors having necessarily collaborated in this, several of the texts have a similar structure, where glimpses of the women's personal lives are combined with stories about their professional activities or militant action. Through these vignettes or stories that illustrate the *life journeys* that they have followed, the authors explore some of the crucial issues that affect not only Aboriginal women but also all of the communities from which they have come or within which they are still carrying out their actions. So their words depict far more than the conditions of Aboriginal women alone and call for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people alike to think about and take action on how we can all live together. Their *life journeys* are thus examples that show how not just Aboriginal women but all of us can take steps so that we are truly *moving toward equality*.

MARIE FRANCE LABRECQUE, PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITÉ DE LAVAL

CAROLE LÉVESQUE, PROFESSOR, INSTITUT NATIONAL DE LA RECHERCHE SCIENTIFIQUE,
CENTRE URBANISATION CULTURE SOCIÉTÉ. DIRECTOR OF DIALOG

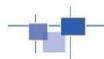


Editorial Note

In Canada, the *Indian Act* dates back to 1876. This colonial federal legislation established an administrative and legal framework governing Indians in Canada and set up a system of tutelage that still regulates Indians' lives today. This system in fact applies to all aspects of the lives of individuals that the government recognizes as "registered Indians" and to all areas in which Indian band councils can intervene (health, education, administrative structure, land régime management, etc.). Individuals with the status of registered Indians can live on a reserve (lands set aside for the exclusive use of Indians) and are entitled to basic services. But, from birth to death, registered Indians are subject to the decisions of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. They are seen as minors in the eyes of the law. Indian bands are administered by local councils; Canada has more than 600 Indian bands distributed into 56 distinct cultural groups.

For nearly a hundred years, the *Indian Act* contained clauses that were especially discriminatory toward Indian women, who automatically lost their status as registered Indians if they married a non-Indian, which meant that they had to leave their band of origin, that they lost their right to inherit family property and lands, and that they had to live off the reserve. Bill C-31, adopted in 1985 after an almost 20-year struggle waged by the main Aboriginal women's organizations across the country—including Quebec Native Women (QNW)—amended some of the provisions of the *Indian Act*. This resulted in several thousands of women across Canada being able to regain their status (as did their children) and meant that they kept this status throughout their lives, regardless of their husband's legal or civil status; they were also, in some cases, able to go back to live on the reserve from which they had come or to which they belonged. But the amendments made to the *Indian Act* since 1985 have led to the creation of a new hierarchy of individuals of different status—who are now commonly referred to as either 6 (1) or 6 (2), depending on whether or not they can transfer their status to their descendants. People classified as 6 (1) can transfer their status, whereas people classified as 6 (2) cannot. The numbers in question refer to provisions of the Act.

According to the 2006 Canadian census, Canada's Aboriginal population is about 1.2 million people, or 3.8% of the total population of Canada. The Aboriginal population includes registered Indians, Métis and Inuit. The *Indian Act* does not concern Métis or Inuit. Moreover, because many Aboriginal people refuse to participate in the Canadian census, a significant proportion of Canada's Aboriginal population is not being considered in the official statistics.



First Part

Twenty Years After Bill C-31, Where Are We Now?

1.1 Standing Up Against Discrimination: The Challenge of Persisting

JEANNETTE CORBIÈRE-LAVELL, TEACHER
ONTARIO NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

I am very pleased to be invited and to be part of this panel to look at the future and discuss where we go from here. Right now, we are at another crucial stage in the challenges that we face. If we are to rectify the current situation and ensure that our children are going to be able to survive and to benefit, now is the time that we must act.

I would like to start by congratulating Quebec Native Women for recognizing the many women who have been at the forefront over the last 30 years. Mary Two-Axe Early was one of my mentors, in 1968-69. She helped me to persist and to move forward.

Fighting Discrimination in the *Indian Act*

I know the main focus in this session is on Bill C-31 and its implications, but I would like to take a little bit of time to reminisce with you. Although I had been aware of human rights and of what was happening on my reserve, the full impact of this particular section, Section 12 (1)b of the *Indian Act*, came to me all of a sudden, after getting married in 1970. I received a letter in the mail from the Department of Indian Affairs, including a small cheque. It said, "Please find enclosed 30 dollars; you are no longer part of your community." I could not believe it. Thirty dollars was my share in our band funds. I was working at the Canadian Indian Friendship Centre in Toronto as a youth worker at the time. Being away from the reserve was at the root of this problem. In Toronto, Clay Ruby, a young lawyer active in advising young people on their basic human rights, advised me that I could do something about this letter instead of just accepting it. So I filed an appeal and it went to county court.

My son, Nimkii, who is now 34, was one of the reasons why this issue was so important to me. If I lost my Indian status, he would never be able to maintain a legal tie to my community, to his grandparents, to his relatives in general. For me, it was different. I had been brought up in my community. I had my language, the values, the teachings—I had all those ties. But I feared that this would not be possible for my children, so I challenged this automatic removal from membership in my community and nation. In 1970, however, we lost our case at the county court. The judge said, "Well, you should be glad a white man married you because we all know what reserves are like." When we went to the Federal Court of Appeal in 1972, we had a much better experience. Three judges ruled, "Obviously this is discriminatory because it only applies to women. This particular section should have been invalidated within the *Indian Act*." However, the Attorney General of Canada appealed this ruling and it went to the Supreme Court. We lost by one vote at the Supreme Court level, in 1973. You can imagine the attitude of the Supreme Court judges at the time, all European men in the early days of feminism, when people were only starting to look at the rights of women—non-Native women, that is. They declared that we had nothing to complain about. The vote was four in support of my particular argument and five against. Judge Ritchie, who voted against, had earlier been involved in a decision to change the *Indian Act*, but that particular decision had to do with being able to drink off reserve and take liquor back to the reserve. Perhaps that was more important to him—and maybe to the men as well!

Making our Voices Heard

In spite of such drawbacks, I am very grateful to have been part of this experience, particularly because of the many women and sisters that I have met right across Canada. To this day, they are my closest and dearest friends. A national organization particularly in support of this issue was Equal Rights for Indian Women. I admired these women for their strength. They would go into a room at the National Indian Brotherhood and meet with lots of opposition and catcalls. We were threatened—we were just constantly harassed. As an Indian woman, I have been brought up to respect my elders, my aunts, and my mother. I was brought up to respect other Indian women and not to show the aggression and the almost outright violence that we were encountering because we were standing up for our convictions. It was definitely difficult, but I think it is important for our young people to remember that, if you believe in what you are standing for, if you believe in the principles and values of our people, it is really worthwhile in the end. As a small group, back then, we were able to stand together to support each other and persevere. We had many fun times, even though money was scarce. Indian Affairs was starting to give money to Indian organizations, but as women, we did not have any access to it. So we travelled on our bake sale money and we managed to get to Ottawa and make our voices heard.

“Stay at Home and Cook!”

The so-called “Lavell” case brought about the emergence of Native women’s organizations right across Canada, such as the Native Women’s Association of Canada. We have branched off into all kinds of other, equally important areas, but, in 1970, this was one of the key motivating issues. After 1973, as Native women, we can no longer be calmed down and told, “Get back home, stay at home, and cook.” Our women persisted.

I remember meeting Pierre-Elliot Trudeau on Parliament Hill, sometime in the eighties. I ran into him in a corridor and I said, “What are you going to do, Mr. Prime Minister? You represent me—I am one of the voting Canadians in this country.” He answered, “Look, I can’t do anything for you as an Indian woman. Go back to your community, convince your Chief, convince your men. Then you can come to us.” Such was his attitude. I insisted, “You represent me as well. I am a citizen of Canada—North America, in fact.” But it did not make any difference.

Many of the numerous Indian Organizations basically said the same thing: “Don’t tamper with the *Indian Act*.” It was really difficult, because many of our women too came out and took this stance. Even though we are sisters, mothers, and grandmothers, we may not necessarily agree on every issue. But I believe that we are all concerned. We have the future and we have a responsibility within our teachings. I have always been told, “You have a role: you are a mother.” I am a grandmother now, and it is our responsibility to do whatever we can, whatever is within our power, to make things better for our families, for our children. Because of those efforts that I started in 1970, and with the support of all the other women and the other organizations for Indian Rights, we did manage to make a few changes.

The Challenge of Persisting

Having spent so many days and nights pondering and writing briefs and submissions, we were finally presented with Bill C-31. And once again, we find ourselves being discriminated against within that section. A case will be brought before the Supreme Court this fall [2005] to protest this discrimination. I give all my support to the women involved. In my family, I was able to regain my Indian status in 1985, and my three children all have their Indian status as well. My oldest son, Nimkii, has a son, Neeganwehdung, who has full status because his mother had her Indian status from her reserve. Now he has a daughter with a mother who is not Indian and my granddaughter, Kyana, does not have any Indian rights whatsoever. So there is a division within my family here stemming from Bill C-31.

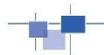
My daughter was married within my community, so her first daughter, Autumn Sky, has full rights within my reserve. She now has another daughter, Eva, just six months old. Eva does not have any rights to my community. In spite of all our efforts and energy, this is being denied to her. So my daughter, who is the President of the Ontario Native Women's Association, is turning this exclusion into a cause. I can only hope that the younger women who are here, those of you who may have gained your status through Bill C-31, realize that this is important. The battle is not over. Here we are, 35 years later, and we still have to talk about what is affecting us, why we are in this position, why we do not have equality, and why we have to persist. It should be obvious. I am now one of the older ones around. People used to say, "You are a warrior, get up there and act." I think I am getting into that next stage where I can sit back and say, "I will support all the younger women." I support my daughter, who is 30 years old. She will achieve change. I believe in her. I believe in that. And I believe in all the other women here. You do have a role to play, an important role, a magnificent role, and I hope you will take up that challenge. You have all my support. It is difficult, you will be crying lots of times, but in the end, it is worthwhile.

Biography

JEANNETTE CORBIÈRE-LAVELL is a member of the Wikwemikong First Nation (Ontario). In 1970, she initiated three years of pursuit to ensure that the rights of Indian women were equal to the rights of Indian men in the *Indian Act*. In August, 1973, Jeannette's case, now known as the Lavell case, was lost at the Supreme Court of Canada, by one vote.

After the *Canadian Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* was enacted in the new Canadian Constitution (1985), Jeannette regained her Indian Status and was re-instated to the Band List of the Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve.

She received her Ontario Teacher's Certificate from McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario in 1976 and has been teaching Fine Arts and Photography to Secondary Students at Wasse-Abin Wikwemikong High School since returning home in 1995.



1.2 Discrimination Is Still Happening

EVELYN O'BOMSAWIN
CITIZENSHIP COMMITTEE, ODANAK

Good morning, everyone. I want to thank DIALOG and Quebec Native Women for asking me to speak at the colloquium *Moving Toward Equality*. Equality? We, as Aboriginal women, are still not equal to our brothers. Discrimination is still happening.

Bill C-31 gave Indian status back to women who had lost it through marriage to a non-Aboriginal person before 1985, but it did not give them the same level of status as that accorded to our brothers and to the children who resulted from these unions. Children born of marriages between Indian women and non-Aboriginal men are registered under Section 6(2) of the *Indian Act*, whereas children born of unions between Indian men and non-Indian women are registered under Section 6(1). The result is that if the spouses of these children are not Indians, their own children, and thus our grandchildren, will not have Indian status.

A Citizenship Code

We as Abenaki men and women of Odanak, together with the band council, have submitted a Citizenship Code to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada a few weeks ago. Through this Citizenship Code, we hope that Indian status will be recognized starting with the current generations of great-grandparents and grandparents. Although Section 10 of the *Indian Act* allows the Odanak band council to recognize its members based on its own criteria, the federal government does not recognize these members, and will not recognize them if we don't do anything.

Section 6 of the *Indian Act*: Discriminatory

We are presently working on another section of the *Indian Act*: Section 6. The Grand Council of the Abenaki was mandated by the communities of Odanak and Wôlinak to contest Section 6 of the *Indian Act* and have it declared discriminatory. To do this, we have to identify all examples of discrimination faced by the women of Wôlinak and Odanak and decide which groups will act as witnesses when we present our case in court. This is where we stand today.

The Governor General's Medal Honours all Aboriginal Militants

I want to add that although I received the Governor General's Medal as an individual, I actually received it for all the Aboriginal women. One person, on her own, could not have accomplished what we accomplished and won. All the women played a part in this work. I would have liked all the women to receive the same medal, because they worked very hard. We didn't have a penny, and we worked on a volunteer basis for a number of years. But we did have objectives, and we did have a dream right from the start. We achieved the few objectives that we had set, because we regained our identity. I'm not just talking about status; I'm also talking about identity, because I didn't have any identity, as either a Quebecer or an Indian. I was considered a "White" in my own community, while my sister-

in-law, who was non-Indian, had Indian status. She was considered Indian, not me. This situation made us sick; it caused us a lot of pain.

This is why we joined the movement that was started nationally and why so many women got involved. The women of Odanak elected me as leader of the Abenaki Nation. I thanked them then and I continue to thank them today. I had something to accomplish in life, without knowing what it was or how to do it. But the women pushed me in that direction. I also want to emphasize the achievements of another pioneer, Évelyne St-Onge, with whom we worked in the early years of the movement.

Women wanted the situation to change and worked hard for these changes to happen. This is why I would have liked to give the medal I received to all the women. When I look at it, I think of all the women who worked so hard. And I think of the young women who will come after us, because we need fresh blood in the movement. For me, it's normal to do what I'm doing, and despite my age, I don't want to stop. So I keep going.

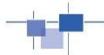
Biography

EVELYN O'BOMSAWIN, a member of the Abenaki community of Odanak (Quebec), is one of QNW's pioneers.

She served first as zone director at the provincial level and then as Quebec's representative to the national association, and was later elected to terms as vice-president and president. She held this latter position from 1977-1983. In 1985, she received a Governor General's Medal to honour her dedicated involvement in the effort to combat discrimination against Aboriginal women.

Ms. O'Bomsawin also worked with Travail-Québec and served as political counsellor of her community's band council for four years.

She is currently a member of the Odanak Citizenship Committee. In October 2004, she was named « Role Model » by the local Aboriginal women's association in the Abenaki Nation of Odanak.



1.3 Bill C-31 in Its Historical Context: Defining People Out of Existence

DIANA SOROKA, LAWYER
BARRISTER & SOLICITOR INC.

First of all, I wish to thank you for the invitation to speak here today. I would like to make clear right from the start that what I am saying is strictly my own view—I do not claim to represent anybody. I have been asked to speak about Bill C-31, involving the famous amendments to the *Indian Act* that were made in 1985. There is a lot to be said about this and there is very little time to say it. But I would like to go back even a little further than Jeannette Corbière-Lavell did, and just speak for a moment about the historical context of the *Indian Act* and particularly of the membership provisions in the *Indian Act*.

The *Indian Act*: “Civilizing and Enfranchising Indians”

The *Indian Act* was enacted in various forms almost 150 years ago. One of its first titles was “An Act for the Gradual Civilization and Enfranchisement of Indians.” The stated purpose of the Act and the membership provisions was essentially to define Indians out of existence. The assumption was that as Indians became more civilized, they would be allowed to take on the status of white people. And this was something that could be looked forward to, and that they should all aspire to. This context is important, because when we speak of the discrimination against Indian women contained in the *Indian Act*, which is still there today in many forms, it is part and parcel of a history in which getting rid of the so-called “Indian problem” meant getting rid of the Indians—being Canadians, however, they were going to do it nicely. They were going to kill us with kindness.

Most of you know about the discrimination that was contained in the old *Indian Act*. Historically, it was not just Indian women who married white men who lost their status—it would be any Indian who got an education, went to university, became a minister, or joined the army. All of these individuals could be enfranchised—that was the term that was used. They would no longer have Indian status; they would be considered to be “white people.” Obviously, when a man was enfranchised, his woman and children went with him, because women had no identity of their own. They had their father’s identity until they got married, and once they got married, they took on their husband’s identity. This was a legal fiction that existed not only for Aboriginal women, but for all women.

Amendments to the *Indian Act*: 1985

When the *Indian Act* was finally amended in 1985 to get rid of some of the most obvious forms of discrimination, the idea was to put women back into the position that they would have been in, had they not been discriminated against in the first place. So women were reinstated to both Indian status and band membership. For the first time, however, a distinction was made between Indian status and band membership. Under the old *Indian Act*, usually, not always, but most often, if a person had Indian status, they also had membership in a band. With the 1985 amendments, this was no longer necessarily the case. First Nations were given the opportunity to pass their own membership codes, which would set out rules for membership in their First Nation. This was something different from Indian status under the *Indian Act*.

I am convinced that the amendments to the *Indian Act* occurred not because the Government of Canada felt any great obligation towards Aboriginal women, but because in 1982, the Constitution of Canada was repatriated and a *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* was included in it. The Constitution being the highest law of the country, it was up to both federal and provincial governments to amend any legislation that did not respect the Charter. And so the federal government had to amend the *Indian Act*.

Protesting Discrimination in the *Indian Act*: Quebec Native Women

Madame Lavell and Madame O'Bomsawin have already mentioned that Quebec Native Women were extremely active in lobbying both for the constitutional amendments in 1982 and for the amendments to the *Indian Act*. They conducted huge lobbying campaigns, they were traveling across the country with other Indian women's groups, and as Madame Lavell made clear, they often carried out their work in the face of threats and actual violence. I will never forget attending meetings at various places across the country where we were among women only, meeting in a hotel, behind locked doors, with nobody else present, and the women were still so frightened that they did not dare raise their voices above a whisper.

Since that time things have changed, but not completely. If you look at the chronology of Quebec Native Women, you realize that Quebec Native Women recognized at a very early stage the connection between discrimination against women and violence against women. Aboriginal women are still facing both personal and institutional forms of discrimination. The most obvious institutionalized discrimination is the *Indian Act*: it continues to discriminate against Indian women. This requires a rather technical explanation. Basically, because it started from a point at which women had already been discriminated against, they were lagging a generation behind compared to their brothers' starting point in terms of registration for Indian status. With the enactment of what we call "the second generation cut-off," commonly called paragraph 6(2), a person with one parent entitled to be registered under paragraph 6(1) is entitled to be registered. But this is where it ends. There is no third generation that can be brought in because a person who only has one parent entitled to be registered under paragraph 6(2) is not entitled to be registered.

The Second Generation Cut-off: a Form of Genocide

As Quebec Native Women argued at the time in 1985, the 6(2) cut-off was basically carrying out the same work that the historical *Indian Act* had always sought to do: it was defining Indians out of existence. Unfortunately, most of the traditionally male Aboriginal societies did not see it this way: they argued against allowing too many people back on reserve. They argued that there was not enough land, not enough housing, and not enough resources. All of this was true in many communities, except that the strongest opposition very often came from the wealthiest bands. The Auditor General noted this in his 1991 report, writing that keeping the women and children off the reserve "usually occurs with wealthy bands that fear the dilution of band wealth and the disruption of existing band power structures."

It has become quite clear that the registration of women as Indians and band members (I use these technical terms as they are used under the *Indian Act*) and the inclusion of their children have resulted in a population bulge. As the second generation cut-off takes effect,

this population bulge will, however, be very short-lived. The AFN has termed this second generation cut-off a form of genocide—which it indeed is. You just have to look at the historical context of the *Indian Act* and you can see why it exists.

The Danger of Narrow Membership Codes

Unfortunately, by the time the *Indian Act* was amended in 1985, much of the discrimination against women had already become entrenched as a way of life in First Nations communities. As a result, some First Nations communities actively seek to enact very restrictive membership codes, forcing people off reserves. This will have a huge impact on reserve populations. Demographers have studied this issue. They will tell you that Aboriginal people living off reserve and bringing up children off reserve are much more likely to marry somebody who is not an Aboriginal person. Because of this, the second generation cut-off comes into play very quickly. So, unfortunately, some First Nations governments continue to carry out the work of the historic *Indian Act*, leading their own people towards extinction.

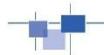
No nation can survive without its women and children. A huge effort is necessary not only to amend the *Indian Act* and get rid of the continuing discrimination against women, but also to educate First Nations leaders about the danger of enacting these very narrow membership codes, which will, within a matter of generations, reduce their own populations down to a point where they are no longer a viable community.

Biography

DIANE SOROKA is a lawyer who has worked with First Nations and with Aboriginals on various issues including treaty negotiation and implementation, court cases to defend Aboriginal and treaty rights, and lawsuits by Indian Boarding School survivors against Canada and various churches.

For more than 20 years, she has worked for Aboriginal women, and particularly with Quebec Native Women, on equality issues, amendments to the Canadian Constitution and amendments to the *Indian Act*.

This work has included legal advice, lobbying, preparation of “plain language” documentation for aboriginal women and preparation of presentations to parliamentary committees.



1.4 The AFN Women's Council: Restoring Women's Voices

CHERYL KNOCKWOOD

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE WOMEN'S COUNCIL, ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

I want to thank our elder Lucie Basile for the opening prayer last night. I am really glad she had an opportunity to get us all to sing together because it is really in song and prayer that we stand united. Unity seems to be an elusive goal in many First Nations communities, and I think the answer to achieving it lies in our quest for spirituality. I also want to acknowledge that I am within the traditional territory of the Mohawk and that I am grateful to be allowed to be here today.

I am also very honoured and humbled to be sitting at the same table with women such as Madame Corbière-Lavell and Madame O'Bomsawin, women who had the strength and courage to fight against oppression and hundred year old policies and laws that were set up to enfranchise or get rid of the "Indian problem." They stood up to it like David to Goliath. I was born at a time when you all stood up—I am 35 years old. The challenge for the current generation, for both the women and the men, is to ensure that the future generations of our people continue to exist. Because we all know what the federal government would like to do, and we cannot allow that to happen.

Women's Issues in the Assembly of First Nations

I am here to talk about the Assembly of First Nations and the work that it is doing on women's issues. As many of you are aware, the Assembly of First Nations is a national organization that represents First Nations in Canada. The organization represents all citizens, regardless of age, gender, or place of residence, and it also represents the interests of 637 First Nations through the elected chiefs, of which approximately 83 are female.

The Assembly of First Nations has recently instituted an Elders, Youth and Women's Council to ensure the existence of a more balanced and holistic structure within the AFN. It is one step in the direction of restoring and giving voice to the traditional roles of women, men, youth, and elders. The AFN charter was amended through Resolution 16-2001 to establish and include a council of women with related roles and responsibilities. This resolution also reaffirmed the preamble of the AFN charter, which in essence states that the equality of men and women has always been the guiding factor, and that both men and women must be involved in the struggle for an equitable society.

The AFN's Women's Council: Organization and Structure

In 2003, the national chief, Phil Fontaine, campaigned on a ten-point plan for action, which included the reestablishment of the AFN Women's Secretariat and the AFN Women's Council. A historical meeting of the AFN Women's Council took place in July during the Annual General Assembly in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. The Council has a seat and a voice on the AFN Executive Committee. The chair of the Women's Council, Miss Chapman, is a full member of the AFN Executive Committee, which includes voting privileges. The Council will be working hard to focus attention on the rights of First Nations women, regardless of where they may reside.

The Women's Council is made up of ten regional representatives and consists of women leaders and female chiefs. I was recently appointed as a representative for the New Brunswick and P.E.I. region. Again, I am humbled to sit at the council table, as I am not a chief. During the first official meeting, the Council developed a comprehensive portfolio system that coincides with the regional chiefs' portfolios to ensure that the unique views, voices, and roles of women are reflected in all AFN policy activities. The Council also developed terms of reference and a work plan, and anticipates playing an active role in advocacy, education, and communication.

The Women's Council also works with the AFN Secretariat to ensure that the concerns and perspectives of First Nations women inform all the work being conducted at the AFN. As one example of an ongoing effort to bring greater policy coherence to the AFN, a more strategic and inclusive approach has been undertaken to invite women's key participation in the Canada Aboriginal People's round table sessions, where gender equality issues are given special consideration.

AFN and the *Canadian Human Rights Act*

The Canadian Human Rights Commission is consulting on an AFN study to repeal Section 67 of the Canadian Human Rights (CHR) Act. The AFN is supportive in repealing the discriminatory Section 67 of the Act, which reads as follows: "Nothing in this Act affects any provision of the *Indian Act* or any provision made under or pursuant to the Act."

Another initiative, Bill C-7, which died on the order paper, the First Nations Governance Act or FNGA, proposed to repeal Section 67 of the Canadian Human Rights Act. In essence, the FNGA or Bill C-7 would not have done anything to advance the issues and rights of First Nations, a fact that was already echoed here today. Therefore, the lack of interest in resurrecting it is a good thing, as we can work on these issues on a more positive level.

Since its creation in 1978, the Canadian Human Rights Commission has been statutorily barred from dealing with complaints relating to the *Indian Act*. The policy laws of Canada have actively oppressed the women of First Nations, diminished their traditional role and responsibilities, and compromised the respect for women in our communities. The *Indian Act* and the 1985 amendments to Bill C-31 contain many discriminatory provisions with regard to land surrender, wills, band elections, Indian status, band membership, and enfranchisement.

The AFN Women's Council: Current Projects

The AFN Women's Council recently put forward a submission to the AFN Renewal Commission that outlines women's perspectives and key recommendations to the Commission. Other initiatives include regional forums that will consider the vital voice of First Nations women from all walks of life, which will assist in developing long-term strategic directions for the Council. These regional forums will also serve in the further development of an AFN Women's analysis framework document, which will ensure a more strategic approach to the inclusion of women in all the work carried out by the AFN. Support from the AFN executive ensures that council members are encouraged and

supported at a regional level to carry out their portfolio activities, which include education, languages, health, and advancing membership concerns.

The AFN Women's Council also continues to focus on women's issues through the strengthening of key linkages with women's groups and organizations, for example by supporting the Native Women's Association of Canada's admirable *Sisters in Spirit* campaign or by collaborating on status and registration issues.

Another positive linkage in advancing awareness of women's issues and rights was established by contributing to Amnesty International's *Stolen Sisters Report* to draw attention to the issue of violence against women.

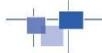
Restoring Women's Rightful Place in Our First Nations

The establishment of the AFN Women's Council is one step in ensuring a better representation of First Nations women's issues within the AFN as an organization. Moreover, it will enhance the social, economic, cultural, and political well-being of all First Nations. In the long term, the Women's Council will seek to restore the historical and rightful place of First Nations women by anchoring their roles and responsibilities in the decision-making processes within the organization, within the communities, and within the nations.

As the elders have stated, given the fact that women are life givers, historians, healers, and transmitters of culture, their rights and well-being are essential to the survival of our people.

Biography

CHERYL KNOCKWOOD is a Mi'gmaq from the Indian Island Band (New Brunswick). She is currently employed as a senior policy analyst with the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nation Chiefs. She is a council member of the recently established AFN Women's Council representing the New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island regions.



Second Part

Recognition and Social Justice

2.1 Social Justice, Impunity and The Condition of Women in Mexico and Canada

MARIE FRANCE LABRECQUE, PROFESSOR
UNIVERSITÉ LAVAL

I'm going to talk about social justice, impunity and the condition of women by comparing cases in Mexico and Canada. As a specialist on Mexico for over 20 years, and due to my interest in both Indigenous issues and gender relations, I was deeply shocked as a researcher and as a woman when I learned of the femicide in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico in 1999. And then, this past year, I learned that Indigenous women in my own country were meeting the same fate. This time, I was shocked as a citizen. In this presentation, I will attempt to compare the femicide in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, with the events denounced by both the Native Women's Association of Canada and Amnesty International regarding the disappearances and murders of Indigenous women in Canada.

These events touch us on many levels. The overall context of the two series of events is that of a lack of social justice, which takes the form of a greater or lesser degree of impunity in each country. To compare the cases in Mexico and Canada, I will use three concepts that I feel are extremely important, that is, the concepts of social class, gender and Indigenous identity. Before describing the events in Mexico, it is important to define the notion of femicide.

Femicide

Femicide is the misogynous murder of women committed by men based on their supposed gender superiority. For femicide to happen, there must be a reprehensible combination of silence, omission, negligence and collusion on the part of the authorities responsible for preventing and eradicating such crimes. Femicide happens when the State does not ensure the safety of women in their community, home, at work, on public transit and in the places where they enjoy their leisure. Marcela Lagarde, an anthropologist and Mexican government representative who described the events to me, affirms that femicide is a State crime.

In Mexico

In August 2003, Amnesty International reported on some 370 cases of women murdered since 1993 in Ciudad Juárez and on thousands of cases of women who had disappeared or were missing, and for which no one had ever been convicted. The bodies of these women have been found on the edges of the city, in vacant lots or dumps, and the crimes continue to this day. Murders of women happen everywhere in the world. But what is particular to Ciudad Juárez is that it is located on the border between Mexico and the United States. The history of Mexican border towns has always been associated with disorder. We only need think of the Prohibition era when Americans went to buy alcohol in these places, because they were unable to do so at home.

In the 1960s, a number of transnational assembly plants—known as *maquiladoras*—were set up in these cities and towns, and this intensified after the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994. The preferred workers at these plants are

women. Ciudad Juárez has a population of 1,390,000 people, nearly half of whom were born outside this city. So there is a great movement of people in the city, and municipal infrastructures such as transportation are generally lacking. Fifty percent of the streets are unpaved and 200,000 families live in high-risk areas. The city is a crossroads for migrants from Indigenous peasant regions, where agriculture has barely survived since the signing of NAFTA. Many immigrants, from other regions of Mexico, as well as Central America, only come to Ciudad Juárez in the hope of crossing the border and going to work in the United States.

Indigenous Identity

Many young women from the south of Mexico are very likely of peasant and Indigenous origin. Nothing in their lives in the countryside prepares these women for Ciudad Juárez. In their village, they cannot go out after dark and they marry the first guy they go out with. The economic independence these young women gain through their wage work in Ciudad Juárez and the contrasts between the restrictions of their earlier life and the relative freedom of their new life have profound and ambiguous impacts on their daily lives and values. In Ciudad Juárez, women's chains fall away. They are easy prey. They don't know the city. In Mexico, it is still taboo for women to frequent bars and they are labelled as prostitutes if they do. Some people have suggested that it was due to their questionable morality that the women in Ciudad Juárez were murdered. They have been accused of leading double lives, that is, of being good little workers by day and partying at night. Many people say that it is not surprising that a few of the victims were seen for the last time in the nightclub district where the *maquilas* workers go to dance and drink.

Gender

The economic transition from rural to urban lifestyle means that these women encounter Mexico's macho culture even more directly. They are also affected by the fact that there are more job opportunities for women than men, women becoming providers. The *maquiladoras* have created a new type of woman but not a new type of man. Other young peasant and Indigenous women arrive without identity papers or money, which puts them in an even more vulnerable situation. To get papers that would allow them to cross the border, they often have no other solution than to turn to prostitution. Ninety-two percent of the murdered women in Ciudad Juárez are immigrant women. The city is practically controlled by organized crime and has been dominated for the past 20 years by the most powerful drug cartel in all of Mexico. There are also apparently more than 500 drug "shooting galleries" in the city. Ciudad Juárez is the most violent city in Mexico, and murders of both men and women have increased since the early 1990s. Murders of men have in fact tripled and murders of women have quadrupled.

But whereas men are killed in the context of settling of accounts, as shown by the way they were killed, women are raped before they are killed and their bodies are more tortured and mutilated than the bodies of the murdered men. This suggests that they are killed simply because they are women. It does not appear to be a case of a settling of accounts, but rather of the manifestation of hatred toward women. The origins of the murders are different. Some of the women were killed by their husbands or boyfriends; some murders are linked to organized crime; others are serial murders of women of a similar body type. People have also suggested the possibility of satanic rites ending in murder or, again, that

some women were victims of snuff videos, that is, they were murdered on camera during the filming of the sexual act or rape. There are other hypotheses about the traffic of human organs. But regardless of the origin of these murders, what especially stands out here is that government authorities, whether federal, state or municipal, have not taken these crimes seriously. They neglect to carry out the most rudimentary gathering of evidence at the sites where the bodies are found, particularly for murders committed before 1998.

Social Class

This negligence on the part of the authorities is linked to the fact that most of the victims are people living in modest circumstances and that their relatives and friends, when these can be identified, hardly have the means to demand that justice be done. Exactly one year ago, as members of the Commission québécoise de solidarité avec les femmes de Juárez (Quebec committee of solidarity with the women of Juárez), we, that is, my colleagues and myself, met with a representative of the Mexican National Human Rights Commission to follow up the case of the murdered women of Juárez. In response to one of our questions, that is, why the impunity continued, he gave an unambiguous answer: “If the daughter of the state governor was one of the victims, the guilty person or persons would have been found and punished a long time ago.” These words remain forever etched in my mind because they directly link the fact that the murdered women of Juárez lived in modest circumstances to the fact that justice is not being done. These words show that justice is not blind, but is instead on the side of the powerful. The disregard with which the mothers of the victims were treated is also striking. One mother told us that the bones of a body that was thought to be her daughter’s were sent to Mexico City for a DNA test. She went to the police station regularly to find out the results, until the day they told her that they had been lost, as if they were the bones of an animal, she said.

In Canada

Regarding the murders of Indigenous women in Canada, my knowledge of this case mainly comes from the Amnesty International report published in October 2004 entitled *Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights Response to Discrimination and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada*. The report’s title directly refers to the presentation of nine case studies on Indigenous women who have been murdered or disappeared since 1970 in three of Canada’s western provinces. Unlike the Mexican case, the report does not give detailed statistics on the murders of Indigenous women in Canada. The international body deplores the lack of accurate statistics, especially on Indigenous women in urban areas, which is due to the division of federal and provincial government jurisdictions, and which paradoxically often prevents governments from identifying problems and needs. Although the report mentions the assertion made by the Native Women’s Association of Canada that over the past 20 years more than 500 Indigenous women have been murdered or have disappeared in violent circumstances, no one knows the exact number.

The personal stories included in the Amnesty International report, that is, the nine case studies based on interviews with family members of the women who disappeared or were murdered, show that in most cases the legal authorities did not take the disappearance of these women seriously. The slow pace of the bureaucratic machinery, as well as the negligence shown by some individuals or their disregard for the lives of these women, stand out clearly. We see that the risks faced by Indigenous women are in some

circumstances exacerbated by racism and discrimination against their Indigenous identity itself. The case of sex workers is especially heartrending; the comments made about these women seek to deny that they are even human beings.

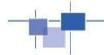
I want to end off by saying that more in-depth studies are needed on the cases of both the murders in Ciudad Juárez and the murders of Indigenous women in Canada. But there is very little research in Canada on the specific links between class, gender and racial inequalities as experienced by Indigenous women. If we truly want to see social justice and greater equality in this country, there is an entire field of study here, which urgently needs resources and energies invested in it. I would say that in some cases the need for such research is even a matter of life or death. Thank you.

Reference

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. 2004. Canada. *Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights Response to Discrimination and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada*. Amnesty International, London, 18 p. <http://www.amnesty.org/fr/library/info/AMR20/001/2004>.

Biography

MARIE FRANCE LABRECQUE received her Ph.D. from City University of New York in 1982 and is a full professor in the Department of Anthropology at Université Laval in Quebec City. Her research, devoted to Aboriginal issues, has taken her to Mexico and the Andes. Ms. Labreque's latest book is *Être Maya et travailler dans une maquiladora. État, identité, genre, et génération au Yucatan, Mexique*, published in 2005 at Les Presses de l'Université Laval. Marie France Labrecque is a member of the DIALOG board.



2.2 The Interface Between the Penal System and Aboriginal People

MYLÈNE JACCOUD, PROFESSOR
UNIVERSITÉ DE MONTRÉAL

As a criminologist, I've been interested in the interface between the penal system and Aboriginal people since 1983 or 1984. Some of the research topics I've developed have been the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in prisons, the history of the imposition of the penal system in the Inuit milieu, and alternative mediation practices such as reparative justice, mediation and sentencing circles. More recently, with Quebec Native Women, I've looked at the itineraries of Aboriginal women who migrate to urban areas, and we're currently working on a project involving social responses to violence against Aboriginal women.

On the theme of recognition and social justice, I'm going to present a list—although not an exhaustive one—of some alternative conflict resolution approaches and will identify their strengths and weaknesses. The presentation of these approaches is closely linked to the series of problems of which Aboriginal women are the primary victims in the communities.

Alternative Conflict Resolution Approaches

How can the emergence of these approaches be understood? The protest movement against repressive institutions in the 1970s, the victims' rights advocacy movement, which began at the end of the World War II, and the movement for recognition of Aboriginal people's rights all had a major influence on the emergence of these approaches. Since the 1980s, in a context marked by the crumbling of the welfare state and the emergence of civil society, we've seen a process of handing over powers to communities, also known as the "neighbourhood," or "community shift." These changes have fostered a crystallization of criticism of the penal system, accompanied by the setting up of alternative approaches to the penal system.

Let's summarize the main criticisms that have been raised about the penal system. First, from the moment a problem situation enters the penal system, the context of the situation is reduced to the point that it becomes difficult to recognize the dynamics or gain an overall picture of this situation. It's fascinating to see, especially in the case of a police event report, the discrepancies between the reported version as experienced by a citizen and the version collated in the police officer's report. Then, as soon as an event enters the penal system, the parties connected by the offence (victims and offenders) are completely dispossessed of the event; the police, lawyers and other actors in the penal system are now in charge of it. Some people say that the penal system shows little consideration for victims. But this is also true for offenders; we may tend to forget this reality. The penal system is extremely stigmatizing; it has negative side effects on the parties involved, on both the victim's and offender's friends and families, and it takes little account of the social and cultural context and overall situation of the parties. It goes without saying that in the Aboriginal context, the penal system is particularly alienating. The other problem is that the penal system is centred on the actual transgression, and thus on the act itself. Hence it is more oriented toward punishment, and neglects the resolution of, and reparation for, the consequences caused by commission of the act in question. All of these criticisms, along with the context described above, have thus led to the setting up of innovative approaches to justice.

Mediation

Mediation is a process in which a neutral and impartial third person organizes a series of discussions between the parties to try to enable them to listen to each other's points of view and, with the mediator's help, find a solution to the conflict between them. What is important in this approach is the context of empowerment of the parties in the conflict, since they are the ones who are being asked to come up with their own solution. This approach is currently in the process of being developed, particularly within Aboriginal justice committees.

Sentencing Circles

The sentencing circle is a consultation process that generally includes the victim, the offender, their respective support groups and community resource persons (such as a social worker, psychologist, police officer, etc.). The process's objective is the adoption of recommendations that will be sent to the judge so that he or she can pronounce a sentence that is appropriate to the milieu and context of the parties involved.

Healing Circles

The healing circle is similar to the mediation process, but goes much further because there is greater emphasis on accountability, support and preparation of the victims, offenders and their respective families. The healing circle can be integrated into a sentencing circle.

The process includes a number of stages: after denunciation of the offence (stage 1), the team of facilitators ensures the victim's protection (stage 2). Two support teams are put together: one for the victim and his/her family, and another for the offender and his/her family. The teams then confront the offender (stage 3). At this point, the latter can decide to be sent back into the justice system; if the offender decides to commit to the circle, he/she must recognize his/her responsibility. The support teams also give the necessary help to the offender's family (stage 4) and to members of the victim's family and the community at large (stage 5). The assessment team then meets with the police officers (stage 6). The purpose of this stage is to present the information obtained on the events and to decide what actions to take. The team, together with the police officers, may decide to send the case back to the justice system. If not, a reconciliation contract is prepared for the offender. This contract is presented in the discussion circles (stages 7 and 8) that are organized, in small groups, with the offender and victim separately. During these meetings, the persons involved are induced to acknowledge the facts and to follow therapeutic support sessions (stages 9 and 10). In particular, offenders are asked to recognize and accept their responsibility in front of their own family. As the victim becomes stronger, the circle is expanded for the "special gathering" (stage 11). This is the core part of the healing process. The offender and victim are face to face. Their respective families are there, as are members of the larger community. Everyone has a chance to speak. During this meeting, a "healing contract" is signed by all the people in the circle. This contract includes a series of measures intended to alter the relationship between the offender and his/her victim or any other person in the community. The minimum period that the contract is in force is usually two years, but some contracts are still in effect five years after the signing date. The healing process symbolically ends with a healing ceremony (stage 12). The

healing circle in Hollow Water, Manitoba is the most structured healing process. It has had excellent results.

Reconciliation and Social Reconstruction: the South African Approach

Peacemaking and peacebuilding committees have been set up in South Africa. They represent a mediation process that includes the parties involved in the conflict and, unlike simple mediation, also includes any person identified by the parties who is likely to help resolve the conflict. The process goes much further than mediation because the emphasis is on analyzing the causes of the problem and looking for solutions. Another innovative aspect is that the mediators are remunerated for each situation presented to the committee. They aren't paid based on their success and resolution of the conflict, but rather based on their handling of the situation presented to them. Another aspect, which I find the most interesting, is that a third of the mediators' pay goes into a fund for the development of peacebuilding activities. Peacebuilding activities are initiated when analysis of the conflict shows that its causes go beyond the individual context.

Could the South African Approach Be Adapted to Aboriginal Realities?

Why do I think this project could be adapted to Aboriginal realities? If we take an average for the 19 existing committees in South Africa, more than a quarter of the situations submitted to them are situations of violence (family violence, rape and assault). An evaluation of this project showed that if the committees weren't there, 63% of the cases would have been handled by police departments. Given this data, the project's proponents demonstrated the savings municipalities could make with this project and got them to provide financing. In one municipality, the police department and the committee are in the same building. The building is no longer called a police station but rather a Peace Centre. Moreover, 93% of the situations submitted to the committees were resolved. We have brought his very promising approach to Quebec and hope to implement it in Aboriginal communities.

In conclusion, I am still critical of sentencing circles. They have in fact led to an improvement in the handling of conflicts because sentencing circles allow judges to hand down more appropriate sentences, but this approach is still very dependent on the penal system. The other three approaches are instead based on the principle of recognizing the capacities of communities and citizens to solve their problems.

For example, in South Africa, the peacebuilding committees are set up in the townships, the equivalent of the *favelas* in Brazil, where levels of violence and crime are extremely high. I don't think we have to limit reparative justice to minor cases, because this is using reparative justice in the opposite way it was intended. Currently, the less there is a need for reparation, the more reparative justice is used, and the greater the need for reparation, the more the punitive approach is used. This is a paradox that we need to overcome.

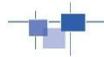
The South African approach is very interesting because it is based on the principle of remuneration and it ultimately leads to the economic rebuilding of communities. The collective commitment of people should be promoted. In my opinion, these approaches enable us to adopt solutions that are much better adapted to the community. I hope that

one day we will adopt this conflict resolution model as the dominant approach, which could be called “social justice,” and that penal justice will then become the alternative approach.

Biography

As a professor of the School of Criminology at Université de Montréal (UM), MYLÈNE JACCOUD heads a research unit focusing on Aboriginal issues at UM’s International Centre for Comparative Criminology.

Her research topics include evaluating Aboriginal justice committees, governance and penal justice, and social responses to violence against Aboriginal women (in partnership with QNW). She also works with the Quebec-based Regroupement des organismes de justice alternative to promote social mediation and peacebuilding projects in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. Mylène Jaccoud is a member of the DIALOG board.



2.3 Advocating for the Rights of Women and Children

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE, VICE-PRESIDENT
QUEBEC NATIVE WOMEN.

Hello, everyone. First, I want to thank the women who struggled before us, who set up the Association and are fighting for the rights of women and children. I also want to thank the representatives of the Nations who work as volunteers in their communities, due to a lack of funding. They often cover very remote regions, as is the case with the Cree, Innu and Atikamekw Nations representatives. These women often have to travel at their own expense. Thanks also to the communities, who now have in their band councils women elected officials responsible for matters relating to the condition of women. The door is half open. This gives women at the grassroots level the confidence that they will be listened to by these women councillors for the condition of women, and that they will be heard.

Shelters for Aboriginal Communities

I'm a woman of the field; I live in the communities, and I visit the communities. The question of injustice towards women is my domain. Let's take the case of the shelters: there are 42 Aboriginal communities in Quebec, and only four shelters specifically for Aboriginal women. We had five, but the Sept-Îles shelter closed last year. Quebec Native Women is holding discussions with the chief of Uashat mak ManiUtenam to reopen this shelter, which was a regional shelter. It served regions as far away as Pakuashipi, La Romaine, Natashquan, Mingan, Sept-Îles and Betsiamites and could accommodate Aboriginal women living in urban areas coming from just about anywhere in the province. We find this closure a great shame, as we don't have enough shelters.

On the financial level, Aboriginal women's shelters receive an average of \$150,000 a year, compared with \$350,000 for Quebec shelters. So our shelters have to cope with a deficiency of \$200,000, which is money we need. The shelters are generally far away from the communities, so that women must often be transported to these centres by plane. But flights are not available at any time of the day or night, and women subjected to family violence have to wait for plane to get there. So it's very hard for these women. It's important, especially for remote communities, to have transition houses for managing crisis situations. Women affected by violence often stay in their homes and endure this violence, either because they are afraid to go to their relatives or because their relatives are afraid of the abuser or rapist. That's often what happens in the communities. Children are also affected by the consequences of this family violence. These women would have some recourse by going to these transition houses and could get the care they need there. Children would also be more comfortable going there while waiting to be transferred to a shelter.

Quebec Native Women offers training services for women who want to work in shelters. In our communities, there is not enough training relating to family violence intervention. For example, some people went to work in the shelters to accumulate enough workweeks to take advantage of unemployment insurance, without having the proper training. So there was no confidentiality, and I fully understand that it was not their area of expertise. Quebec Native Women's Association manages a training program for Aboriginal shelter workers.

Recommendations have also been made in the area of non-violence advocacy, and the Association has submitted briefs to the Social Affairs Commission, for example. You can obtain these documents by contacting Quebec Native Women's Association.

Health Services Access for Aboriginal People in Remote Regions

I also want to talk about health. In very remote regions, people have to travel by plane to have access to health care and services. So the vulnerability of people who are ill or very ill is heightened, and this situation often leads to deaths in the communities because we intervened too late. This system is outdated. Even for a toothache, we have to wait for the plane. We don't have any services; there are no dentists or specialists in remote communities. Pregnant women have to travel to urban areas a month before giving birth. So this calls for a lot of organization in terms of babysitting and child care for children staying at home, for example. These are things we really have to think about. Health services must also be provided to people living off reserve. I live off reserve, in Sept-Îles. First, I had a file at the Uashat dispensary, 15 minutes walking distance from my home. Then, because I live off reserve, my file was transferred to the Sept-Îles polyclinic, and now I have to take a taxi to get there, to see the same doctor who also works in the community of Uashat. Because I don't have a band number in Sept-Îles, I had to deal with the city. I said: "My God! You're discriminating against me even though I'm an Aboriginal person. It's the same care as that being given in the communities." I felt that it was discriminatory. We're discriminating against one another. I think that it's a consequence of the laws that were imposed on us.

In terms of jobs, the communities give priority to people who are community members, but that's a discriminatory practice as well. We've learned to discriminate against one another and we put this discrimination into practice. We experience it and we make other people experience it. I say to myself: "People who have experienced injustice in their lives are in a position to understand." I thought that we were in a position to understand not to subject other people to injustice, but we've done it anyways.

I also want to talk about social development services, what they call social welfare. When young people move to another city, for example, and apply for income security, their case workers often ask them: "Why did you move? Why are you coming back to the region?" As if they didn't have the right to come back to the region. And if the person had had problems with violence or other problems in his or her area of origin, they may not want to talk about it with just anyone. It's as though we always have to explain ourselves. I find that it's unjust to subject people to these questions. Young people living on income security who want to go back to school also face a form of injustice. For example, a young woman I know wants to go back to school and needs help finding a daycare. But the CLSC is the only organization responsible for finding daycare for people receiving income security and for determining who really needs it. This young woman has been asking the social development office for help so that she can go back to school for 6 months now, and nothing has been done yet. And the workers at the social development office will often say: "If you go back to school or back to the labour market, you'll get \$200 more a month." But if it's not them who decide on the educational institution or who look for the job, the person won't be entitled to the service. So people are experiencing things like that.

Injustice in the Area of Jobs

The same thing happens in the area of jobs. As band council employees, we aren't protected because we don't have a union. Jobs are often distributed by clan and according to the election results. Whether we're men or women, if we didn't vote for the chief who won the elections, we're afraid: "Will I lose my job?" That's the reality. That's why I'm not afraid to denounce this or talk about it openly. It's a run-of-the-mill, everyday situation in our communities. People don't hesitate to talk about it anymore and we say to ourselves: "Okay, if that chief wins, I'll prepare for it and try to find another job because I know he won't keep me." But that's not normal. When you have a job and you're a good employee, the new band council should keep you. If they don't, it's injustice. I think that we should have citizens' committees to defend people facing this kind of discrimination. There is also injustice in the area of employment equity, especially in terms of salary scales. It seems that Aboriginal people, even if they're graduates, earn less than non-Aboriginal people. For example, a young Aboriginal woman with a university degree had been hired under the employment equity policy, as well as a young non-Aboriginal man with a diploma of college studies. It was found that the young man was earning a higher salary. Is it just a façade to say: "We hire Aboriginal people. We've hired one now, thanks: we've done our duty"? This is another aspect that we have to look at.

Categorization of Aboriginal Children: the Extinction of Aboriginal People?

Finally, I often talk about categories of Aboriginal people, that is, 6(1)s and 6(2)s¹. It's only among Aboriginal people that individuals are categorized, like we do for chicken, Category A or B, or beef. I'm in the best category; I'm a 6(1). Next, my children are maybe just a bit off, since they're 6(2). Then, my great-grandson and my grandchildren who had non-Aboriginal fathers are rotten, I suppose, because they are no longer Aboriginal people, they no longer have a category. This is really an injustice that we have to look into. We are responsible, whether we are men or women, for our Nations.

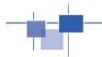
In the past, when I spoke about the extinction of Aboriginal people, people smiled. Today, these same people are affected by this situation, because they have children. In addition, even if your child had an Aboriginal birth father, if this father doesn't recognize his paternity, the child has lost half of his identity, and if this child has a child with a non-Aboriginal person, your Nation has come to an end. When we talk about genocide, people often reply: "No, it's not genocide: you're not dead." Yes, we are dead. The Nation will die if we don't hurry up. Nearly 70,000 Aboriginal people across Canada don't have Aboriginal status, and that's something! We are negotiating our lands for the next 30 to 50 years, but who will be on our lands in 30 or 50 years if we don't do anything today?

I just wanted to make you aware of these injustices. I can't talk about justice when I see injustice. I want there to be justice, I want it with all my heart. I want to see equality between men and women, because it is only when we are together that we can have a better Aboriginal society. Yet we are proud to be Aboriginal people, to have an Aboriginal identity. But what are we doing to save this identity? Are we ready to fight again? We don't have a lot of time. We have to act quickly. Thank you.

¹ See Editorial Note on page 3.

Biography

MÉRILDA ST-ONGE, who comes from the Innu community of Betsiamites (Quebec), has been involved in the Quebec Native Women's movement for over 20 years. She was a member of QNW's board of directors for several years and was elected vice-president in 2004. Her priorities for action include advocacy on behalf of Aboriginal women's rights, promotion of non-violence, and Aboriginal women's shelters.



2.4 Promoting Non-Violence

CHRISTINE SIOUI WAWANOLOATH
COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER, LAND INSIGHTS

Bonjour! Kwé! Hello! I've been asked to tell you about my involvement in the "Promotion of non-violence" dossier, which I coordinated during my ten years working with Quebec Native Women, and to give you its history. This made me think about what I had done in terms of the family violence issue, and I realized that I hadn't begun this work with Quebec Native Women but actually with the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre, where I was program director. Native friendship centres are wonderful schools. They are multifaceted places that encompass areas as diverse as culture, sports, social activities, health, and so on. They really are extraordinary places. I worked at the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre for six years.

In 1987, people began to talk a lot about violence against women. My sister, Monique Sioui, who died in 1997, was very much concerned with this topic. Together, we (Jacqueline Kistabish, Jean MacDonald and myself) formed a small committee to organize the first regional colloquium in Abitibi—and possibly Quebec—on violence against Aboriginal women and children. It was fantastic to see the communities' interest—and the interest not only of women but also of men. From the outset we wanted to include men, so that they would know what violence is, and be an integral part of this struggle that we women were organizing in order to acquire dignity: the dignity and integrity that everyone deserves. This was my first experience in this area. Then, I got really involved full time in the non-violence dossier when I became coordinator with Quebec Native Women in 1992.

At first, I was a little lost; the duties weren't well defined yet and the coordinators before me had tried to do things like visiting the communities and publishing small newsletters. As for me, I knew that I wouldn't be taking that direction. I thought about it a lot and consulted with my colleagues at work. Together, we first looked at what Quebec Native Women could accomplish in this area, and what I could do personally.

That's when we decided that we needed to do some research; all the knowledge in this area had to be brought together so that we could see what was being done elsewhere and begin to talk about it. And that's what we did. We worked for three years on this, and one of the things we accomplished was to organize the first provincial colloquium on violence, which was held in 1995.

A Dossier with a Name That Reflects Our Reality: Promotion of Non-Violence

I was also concerned about the name of the dossier, because it is important to name things properly. I said to myself that the dossier, which was then called "Family violence," did not reflect what we wanted to do. So I asked the board of directors to change the name to "Promotion of non-violence," which suggests a much broader view of violence. The roots of violence stretch far back into history. They have been there for hundreds of years; and we're not only talking about violence against women but also about violence against men and children.

The intention of the “Promotion of non-violence” dossier was to analyze and define violence in the Aboriginal milieu. The aim of our first colloquium was to define the various types of violence and talk about them. We looked at issues of physical, spiritual, intellectual and territorial violence, racism, and so on. We wanted to encourage people to start to really talk about these issues, because it is by talking about them that we are able to change mentalities and attitudes in individuals, and also in communities and families. We held three colloquiums on this theme, in 1995, 1998 and 2001. Each colloquium had an Aboriginal name. The last one, for example, was called *Skennen: kowà*, which means “great peace” in Mohawk. People continued to talk about the subjects we discussed in these colloquiums for quite some time.

A Few Titles of Quebec Native Women. Publications on Violence

Here are a few titles of Quebec Native Women publications: *Beyond violence, preceded by The Legend of the Bird who Couldn't Fly Anymore*, which explores the historical side of violence among Aboriginal people; and *Highlights of the “This Is the Dawn” Colloquium*, accompanied by a brief communication guide. We also produced a first booklet, *Our Families, a World to Discover*, and then another, *Sexuality in the Circle of Life*. This last booklet, distributed during the 1998 colloquium, had a major impact.

A Story Testifying to the Impact of these Publications

On this topic, I want to tell you a story that someone told me at the last colloquium, in 2001. Mrs. Jacqueline Kistabish gave her remarkable testimony about her experience of wounded sexuality. She related what happened from the time she went to residential school up to her life as an adult woman. The man who told me the story, and who found her account extraordinary, said to me: “You know the booklet: *Sexuality in the Circle of Life*? Well, there’s a woman from one of the communities (he didn’t tell me her name) who took the booklet, started reading the part about residential school and became upset. She then said, ‘Someone told my story!’ At this point, she took the booklet, hid it and never spoke about it again. She really thought it was her own story.” I was stunned when I heard that. It’s true that this story about residential schools, about sexual and spiritual violence, is the story of many women. This woman realized after a few months that it was not actually her story but Jacqueline’s. This really struck me. These publications are very good, and are probably still available at QNW.

Another Important Dossier: Justice

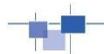
When I was coordinator, we also tackled justice issues. We soon realized that coordinating this dossier was a full-time job. In 1998, QNW met with the Quebec justice minister to obtain funds to hire a justice coordinator. The justice coordinators have put together some extraordinary things in the area of justice. The “Promotion of non-violence” dossier could not cover all of that; there are many things to deal with and we need to have someone working on them every day.

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Biography

CHRISTINE SIOUI-WAWANOLOATH is of Abenaki-Wendat origin. After completing college studies in art, history and photography, she became programs director for the Native Friendship Centre of Val-d'Or (1985 to 1991). She then served as coordinator for the promotion of non-violence file at QNW from 1992-2002. Since 2002, she has been with Land InSights, an association created to promote Aboriginal culture. She has also enjoyed a reputation since the 1970s as a superb illustrator and author working with Aboriginal themes.



Third Part

Other Approaches to Democracy

3.1 A Feminist Outlook on Democracy

JOCELYNE LAMOUREUX, PROFESSOR
UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À MONTRÉAL

I am moved and honoured to be here. I'm going to talk about a feminist outlook on democracy. When we talk about democracy, we're talking about a model of democracy, the dominant model in the West, which originated in Ancient Greece. But we tend to forget that there weren't just Greeks on one side and barbarians on the other; there were the Greeks and several other civilizations, cultures and communities who were experimenting with various forms of democracy, contesting authoritarian leaderships, and advocating the right to free speech and the idea of inclusion. We shouldn't forget that diverse cultures and different forms of civilization made significant contributions to citizenship and democracy.

Following many experiences in the women's movement, and following research, discussions and exploratory work by feminists—both in the field and in the universities—a very critical eye was cast on democracy. This is the topic that I'd like to talk to you about, that is, the contribution of women and the feminist movement to the reflection on democracy.

When I talk about feminism, I'm talking about feminism as a political philosophy; a political philosophy that is very varied and multifaceted. There are all kinds of feminism. When I talk about the women's movement, I'm talking about a type of social mobilization that takes a number of forms. But whether we're talking about feminism or the women's movement, it is always a matter of working for equality between men and women and for women's autonomy. These two ideas, equality and autonomy, are central.

One of the first criticisms of democracy concerns its origins: the birth of democracy. I won't talk too much about Athenian democracy—Greek democracy—although a lot of things could be said about it. For example, the word democracy comes from *demos*, which means the people, and *cratia*, which means the power of the people. The *demos* in particular was the people made up of Athenian men; women, slaves and foreigners were not included in Greek democracy. On the other hand, this was an extremely important experience in that it set a certain number of guidelines for democracy in general.

The democracy that would emerge from the American Revolution and the French Revolution would have the great slogans of liberty and fraternity and a liberation project. The problem with the type of democracy that resulted from these revolutions, called liberal democracy, is that it didn't include women. We must then ask ourselves the following question: how is it that it took several centuries for women to gain access to democracy? Democracy was at first exclusive; that is, it excluded people that could have been part of it. Democratic struggles were about allowing more people to enter into democracy. But only so many people can be allowed access to democracy at any given time, or the whole thing will blow up. This then implies that the forms democracy takes must also be changed (since democracy was conceived by those very people who make it up).

How is it that, for centuries, the great notions of liberty, equality and fraternity were not extended to women, children, foreigners, Black people, people in the colonies, and Aboriginal peoples?

Differences Between the Sexes: Two Spheres Where Women Faced—and Still Face—Discrimination

In a way, if liberty—or freedom—did not apply to women, it is because we accepted “natural” differences between men and women. We defined women according to their capacity to give birth and be mothers. It is in this sense that their exclusion was based on their female gender. One telling anecdote is that, at that time, biology illustrations depicted women with strong legs and hips, since they bore children, and a small head, so that the capacities to reason and be autonomous weren’t contained in that small head. Moreover, the word hysterical comes from the word uterus. People were afraid that the uterus would go to women’s heads and this was how it was explained that they weren’t capable of exerting authority or being part of public life.

First, the differences between men and women would be accepted as natural, and political theory would be based on a strict division between the public and private spheres. The public sphere, the sphere of work and politics, was reserved to men. The private sphere, where women were confined and deprived of rights, was the domestic, conjugal and family sphere. This radicalization of differences and the theorization of politics based on two completely separate spheres would then lead to a gendered social contract, that is, a social contract that was part of the sexual division of labour.

This led to a number of things, especially because women’s inferiority would be sanctioned by law, and this would apply in most Western countries. So women’s inferiority was written into law, which meant that married women were considered legally incapable and women had the status of minors and dependents. It also hampered the recognition and exercising of a number of basic freedoms. This binary theory—men on one side and women on the other—was said to be complementary. But it was actually a hierarchicized complementarity; that is, one sphere and some people were more important than others. It would be a hundred years or more before the promises of the democratic revolutions of 1789 could be realized. We have only to think, for example, of women’s right to vote.

So women were seen as without reason; without the capacity to decide for themselves; without independence, autonomy, and the capacity to enter into contracts and be in full possession of themselves.

This naturalistic argument, this way of discussing things in terms of differences, and the fact that women were confined to the family would make women both minors and minorities. It was the majority that monopolized the main powers over society. This minoritization and categorization of women led to something that is extremely important, something that we are still fighting against today. Women are the objects of policies—specific policies are developed for women—but they are not subjects of law.

Feminism and Women’s Movements: the Struggle

Women need to gain access to politics and refuse to be labelled in their specificity in order to gain access to political rights. The struggle of women is not a specific struggle; it is a struggle for democracy, a struggle to become subjects and to produce something new.

One of the important contributions that women have made has been to create an expanded political space. Let’s take, for example, the slogan: “The personal is political.”

What does that mean? It means, to paraphrase political scientist Diane Lamoureux, that relations of power can be seen just as well in bed as at the end of a bludgeon. In other words, the personal sphere is affected by extremely problematic relations of power. In saying that the private is political, we extend the limits of democracy and politics.

Another contribution to democracy and politics is that women, the women's movement and feminism have developed a more complex notion of equality by thinking about equality and difference at the same time. If we don't think about equality and difference at the same time, we are denying who we are. If we don't demand equality while proclaiming our difference, we risk minoritizing ourselves.

Another contribution made by women is reflection on the question of the diversity and plurality that must be at the heart of politics. What is politics? It is different subjects, different debates and different projects. Plurality is central to politics, and women have reflected on it on the basis of their various identities; for example, their identities: as a woman, mother, lover, Aboriginal person, teacher, etc. Indeed, we have had to reflect on the fact that we have, collectively and individually, a plurality of identities as subjects.

A Struggle Excluding, Among Other Women, Women from Aboriginal Communities

Françoise Collin, the French philosopher, said: "I am a woman but my 'I' is not just a woman. My 'I' is much more complex." Let us transpose this to the level of "us." It was very important for us as women to have met together. At the beginning, when people who are oppressed, discriminated against and exploited come together, it is a question of building a homogeneous "us." But we found that this "us," in the Quebec women's movement, was also an exclusive "us." And who reminded us of this? First, it was the lesbians, who reminded us that the "us" of heterosexual women was not very inclusive. Then, it was Aboriginal women and women from the ethnocultural minorities who told us that they didn't recognize themselves in the women's "us." Very recently, sex workers have tried to enter the women's movement and have said the same thing.

An Identity That Is Opening Up and Becomes More Diverse

Gradually, it became a question of a much more open and diverse identity. An identity that encourages us to think of ourselves as a differentiated "us," made up of complex "I's".

We are contributing to an extremely important reflection on plurality and diversity, and we find ourselves at the heart of politics, characterized by the plurality of subjects, debates and projects. What's more, we had to look at inclusion in a new way and ensure that everyone is in fact present in society, that is, that everyone is finally included in citizenry. Women are not a minority, but their struggle has helped all minorities.

Finally, Deliberation

The itineraries that women have followed—our ways of doing things, our ways of meeting together, and our ways of deciding together—are just as important as our corpus of demands. If we aren't able to organize ourselves in a more collective, more inclusive way and with greater solidarity, our demands won't be of any use. The women's movement has shown that the process is just as important as the list of demands, as the final result.

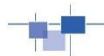
Women have been induced to think about something that is very important for democracy: that is, deliberation (the act of talking together, of deciding together).

A number of other elements have been brought into the discussion: the importance of welcoming and recognizing the other and the importance of different ways of expressing oneself. In this sense, allowing emotion, symbolism and other potential means of expression, including narration, into the deliberation has been extremely important. This means telling others about our journey and our experiences, and reconnecting with what has happened to us. When we come together to deliberate, we should always ask ourselves whether all the people directly concerned by the discussions are gathered around the discussion table, because speaking in the name of others is a problem. These people should be there to express themselves from their own perspective—that reflect the social relations that they have experienced and that affect them—to allow for far wiser decision-making.

These are some of the extremely important elements that have been introduced by the women's movement and feminism in their efforts to take a different approach to politics. Thank you very much.

Biography

JOCELYNE LAMOUREUX is a sociology professor at Université du Québec à Montréal. Her research focuses on social movements: the women's movement and the independent community movement in Quebec and, more specifically, their relations with politics, citizenship and democracy. She has published books and articles on the paradoxical relationship between the State and groups in the social movements; on the perceptions and practices of citizenship of impoverished, immigrant and marginalized persons who join community groups; and on democracy within women's groups.



3.2 Aboriginal Feminism: an Indigenous Path Towards Social Justice

JOYCE GREEN, PROFESSOR
UNIVERSITÉ DE RÉGINA

It is an honour for me to be here and I want to thank Carole Lévesque and Quebec Native Women for inviting me. I also want to acknowledge that we are on Huron-Mohawk territory because I think it is important that wherever we go in this country, we acknowledge that we are on someone's territory. In this way, we invoke colonialism and then move to challenge it.

When I was asked to give a presentation, I initially planned on presenting a paper that I am in the process of writing, called *Towards Aboriginal Feminism*. I decided instead to tell you about the process leading up to the paper. I will focus in particular on the Aboriginal Feminism Symposium that I organized in 2002. Aboriginal feminism is part of that small critical discourse that increases the depth and the health of democracy. And it is precisely because it is a marginal, much maligned discourse that it is particularly important to be attentive to it, because in our communities and in our societies, those without power have the most difficulty being heard, and yet they have the most revealing analyses to contribute to a discussion of power relations.

I want to dedicate my presentation to all of our foremothers and in particular to Shirley Bear, a Maliseet feminist, healer, political activist, and artist. She was active in the Tobique Women's Group in the 1970s, which fought against the *Indian Act* and Indian Band exclusions of Indian women from their communities because of section 12(1)(b) of the *Indian Act*. In 1979, the Tobique Women's Group organized the Native Women's Walk from the Mohawk territory at Oka to Parliament Hill in Ottawa to draw public attention to the problems of Native women (Silman 1927). She was also an enormous inspiration to all of us at the Aboriginal Feminism Symposium.

Who Dares Declare Herself an Aboriginal Feminist?

So why was this symposium held? I had noticed from my own political work as well as from my academic work that women in Aboriginal communities who spoke out and talked critically about power relations usually were labelled feminists, whether they were or not. This label was designed to silence them. So I wanted to see if something called Aboriginal feminism actually existed. Not many women say that they are Aboriginal feminists—many more say they are not. In fact, Aboriginal women are quite cautious about claiming this label and about being publicly identified as feminist. The symposium was designed to be a safe space for women who declared themselves Aboriginal feminists. These women had been the subject of much abuse. This explains the small scale of the event: the symposium brought together about two dozen participants and observers. The program included panel presentations and was followed by round table discussions. I had invited the participants on the basis of either my own familiarity with their positions and their activism, or through references from other women. Most of the women at the symposium considered themselves feminists, but a few of them were ambivalent and perhaps even hostile to the label, as they saw it as being a divisive, foreign ideology designed particularly by white women in opposition to men. This does not reflect my view of feminism, but it is

important to be aware of how people in general conceive of feminism, because this explains some of the political reaction to it.

Women at the symposium talked about how difficult it was to organize as women and as feminists. The political rhetoric that is used to silence them is extremely personal and puts them in a position from which there is no possible adequate response, because the moment they begin to object to oppression, they are labelled as being alien (that is, non-Aboriginal, whitewashed) precisely because of their objections. But if they do not object, they are out anyway. So it really is a no-win situation.

Applying a Feminist Analysis

The topics discussed at the symposium were wide-ranging, but in all presentations a feminist analysis was applied. Speakers addressed the connection between children's future and self-government in treaty negotiations; the *Indian Act*; women, violence, and psychological trauma; elders' perspectives on race and racism; Aboriginal feminist activism; First Nations and Inuit constitutional and political development; Aboriginal identity politics; and teaching in a racist and sexist academy. All of the women were attached to and were defenders of their communities and cultures. Many spoke their own languages. Some were traditionalists, some political activists, and others academics, professionals, working women, or administrators. None of them, however, fit the stereotype of being "untraditional" because of their critical or feminist perspective.

Quotes from the Round Table

I would like to share a few quotes from the round table, which I use with permission: 1. "Aboriginal feminism is the tool that will bring about decolonization." 2. "Feminism helps women and men by healing women and men and crafting healthier relationships." 3. "The way to defend claiming the Aboriginal feminist identity begins by saying that patriarchy and sexism is a problem in our community, not just a problem of generic colonialism." 4. "The larger picture of feminism is a genuine caring for humanity, and the opposition to any kind of oppression."

The overwhelming consensus among the participants was that there was no neat definition of Aboriginal feminism and that we really did not need one. We conceived of it as a political process, rooted in personal experience with oppression and a desire to seek social justice.

The Stigma of Feminism

Academic publications suggest that Aboriginal feminists have some terrain in common with other Aboriginal women seeking social justice, who may not identify as feminists, as well as with non-Aboriginal feminists. Aboriginal women labelled as feminists, however, have endured political and social ostracism and sometimes threats of violence. They have been denied access to programs and funding. Such pressure, a form of ideological coercion, has tainted feminism for many women, and it has made the label something to be avoided. Women who have complained about band politics, distribution of resources, or violence against women and children sometimes also find that they are slapped with the label "feminist." Moreover, Aboriginal women find that their authenticity, their very identity is also challenged. It is as if there is some authority that has decided that Aboriginal women cannot be culturally authentic, or traditional, or acceptable, if they are critical. Indeed,

some women find themselves being criticized for being traitors to their community. This stifles critique and political debate, and it taints the kinds of democracy we are trying to achieve in Aboriginal communities.

The lack of intellectual and political space for the free and vigorous exchange of ideas suggests that Aboriginal feminists do not enjoy enough security to participate routinely in the freedoms of speech, thought, and association, which are considered a minimum for citizenship. Security does not exist for Aboriginal women who embrace ideological or theoretical positions that are consistent with feminism. According to the women who contributed to this symposium, the ability to participate politically and socially from a feminist's stance affected their employability, their personal relationships, and sometimes even their physical security.

Colonialism Within

Colonialism, “the big ugly” as Winona Stevenson calls it, is closely tied to racism and sexism. What these women suggested was that colonialism is not only oppression “out there,” but that it has also been incorporated in some Indigenous communities. This makes it all the more difficult to begin arguing against these attitudes.

The oppression of women by men in Aboriginal communities and Indigenous governance practices was addressed as well. Those women who considered themselves feminists were the most courageous in linking sex and race suppression. They are viewed as political adversaries not only by colonial society, but also by the primarily male Indigenous elites, whose power they challenge.

Liberation as Indigenous Discourse

Liberation, as a discourse of decolonization, relies partly on the force of traditional cultural and political mechanisms, and partly on seeking solidarity with other non-Indigenous activists and movements, particularly global ones. Liberation, according to the women at the symposium, is thoroughly Indigenous in character—there is no contradiction in being politically active, in connecting with other movements, and in being Aboriginal.

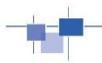
The symposium has resulted in a network in which we continue to share insights and offer support to each other. Moreover, I am in the process of editing a collection of chapters contributed by some participants and other women who joined later. [Editor's note: *This collection, Making Space for Aboriginal Feminism*, was published by Fernwood Press in early 2007.] Our next Aboriginal feminism symposium will hopefully be held in 2005 or 2006, with a much longer list of participants this time: there are more women joining in, more ideas, and more power.

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Biography

JOYCE GREEN is cross-appointed in Political Science and Women's Studies at the University of Regina. Her current research focuses on Aboriginal feminism, Aboriginal decolonization, and the transformation of Canada's political culture of racism. She is originally from British Columbia, and her family has English, Ktunaxa, and Cree-Scottish Metis roots.



3.3 A Different Type of Democracy

MICHÈLE TAÏNA AUDETTE, ASSOCIATE DEPUTY MINISTER
SECRÉTARIAT À LA CONDITION FÉMININE, GOVERNMENT OF QUEBEC

First, I want to thank the Mohawk Nation for receiving me on their land. For me, it's a very special moment to be part of this panel and to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Quebec Native Women (QNW). I've been working in this movement for several years now and it's a job that has to be done every day, with a lot of love and energy and, sometimes, frustrations, which are also part of the job in a movement like Quebec Native Women. It's a job that's worth the struggle. I want to thank all the women—the pioneers and women in the communities—who worked so hard for more justice. I'm thinking of those who, long before me, spoke out and denounced all these injustices that we still face today. We need to remember that the rights we gained through the struggles women have led since the 1970s are still fragile, and that we have to be careful, even in the Aboriginal movement.

I've been asked to speak to you about a different type of democracy. I'm going to talk about the experience I've gained during my time at QNW.

Canada has been recognized by the international community as one of the best countries in the world, which also implies that Canada is recognized as a democratic country. Democracy is defined as a political system of government by the people. In the dictionary *Le Petit Robert*, democracy is described as a “[translation:] a political doctrine in which the supreme power is vested in all citizens,” and it is said that “[translation:] democracy lies in respect for the freedom and equality of all citizens.”

After reading this, I asked myself whether, in everyday life, we really experience democracy in our communities. Democracy has certain inherent characteristics: the right of peoples to decide their fate, the existence of a political authority, individual free choice, the individual's power to choose the party leader and values that he or she supports, and the duty of these parties in power to answer to the people, to men and women. Power also means accountability. Peoples such as ourselves as Aboriginal peoples therefore have the right to require that elected officials be accountable to us, and to know the reasons behind their decisions and the impacts of their decisions. We have the right to get answers.

Do We Have Real Democracy in Aboriginal Communities in Quebec and Canada?

I'm not a jurist or an expert in the field, but I have witnessed and observed many things. There are deficits in regard to democracy in the communities. Some band councils—not all—have sometimes been ineffectual, especially because real power is exercised elsewhere, that is, in Ottawa. There is no clause in the *Indian Act* on accountability. Our chiefs, our elected officials, our band councils, are accountable to Ottawa but not to the people. So that's what I call a democratic deficit in our communities.

An outside entity decides for us, because we as Aboriginal people are still legally considered minors, just as women were considered legally incapable some years ago in Canada and Quebec.

There's an English legal expression referring to a "father-in-trust for all Indians." So I have two fathers: my biological father and a father represented by the federal government, which is responsible for elections and membership in my community. Note that the reference is not to citizens in an Aboriginal community but rather to members, which undoubtedly has a legal impact. This same entity makes decisions about the future of our territories, including our land rights, the amounts of money distributed to us, how and where we can pursue our education, etc. There's a long list. Even though I'm 33 years old, I have people making decisions for me.

From the *Acte pour les Sauvages* to the *Indian Act*

The advent of the *Indian Act* was not a haphazard event. It coincided with the arrival of the Europeans. An entire philosophy underlied the imposition of this act. The Europeans of course arrived here on this vast land, saw Aboriginal people, and decided on the strategy of assimilating us, particularly by trying to sedentarize the nomadic peoples by trying to turn them into farmers. Imagine: asking a nomadic people to stay in one place and wait for the caribou to come by so they could milk them. Good luck! Obviously, it was a failure.

After this failure, the government moved to adopt a *Gradual Civilization Act*. The title is clear, especially in French [*l'Acte pour l'émancipation graduelle des sauvages*]. Over the years, the legislation was changed and became *l'Acte pour les sauvages*. This legislation is today known as the *Indian Act*. Obviously, we are dealing with a complex legal framework in which it is difficult to integrate the concept of democracy. At the same time, things are happening in the communities.

Women are Calling for Mobilization

For example, Quebec Native Women has been propelling change for a number of years. The Association has mobilized a lot of people and has taken stances, especially in the area of justice and human rights. In the communities, over the past 30 or 40 years, we've seen and heard about all this mobilization centring around self-government and the right to self-determination, but women weren't sitting at those negotiating tables. So, those decisions and claims were made by men, acting in their own interest. Obviously, at that time, women didn't call themselves feminists. Even today, it's hard for women in the communities to call themselves feminists. In these discussions about self-government, there's an important area that isn't being discussed: greater well-being, promotion of non-violence, health and human rights. So, yes, Quebec Native Women supports the concept and values of self-government, but under certain conditions: women have to be an integral part of this project. We aren't talking about women sitting on negotiating committees and being asked to serve coffee, as I heard about a year ago—and yes, it is still happening. Women are still being discriminated against because they are women. We must work with the various governments and organizations—Aboriginal political organizations—to ensure that concrete measures are taken so that women are part of all these decision-making processes, at every level. During a province-wide tour in 2000, Quebec Native Women met with nearly 200 women from all First Nations in Quebec, and the message was clear: in any new social project, women must be present.

I believe that democracy can be achieved in our communities. We are trying to achieve this. Sometimes there are deficits in this area and sometimes there is hope. When the

legal framework that currently prevails changes in our communities, we will be able to establish democracy. But first we have to continue our reflection, as it was started by QNW. We have to continue the discussions between men and women, between the people and elected officials, and with various levels of government; we have to foster dialogue and reflection, while telling the truth about things as they are. Mobilization at the local level, including men and women, and beyond the leadership arena alone, is very important, as is the mobilization of nations that may share the same territory. This reflection must be the focus of true debate, of true dialogue.

So, to conclude, to make a new model of democratic life possible, women—both young and not so young—must absolutely be present. Thank you.

Biography

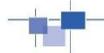
MICHÈLE-TAÏNA AUDETTE is from the Innu community of Mani-Utenam (Quebec).

Since March 2004, she has been associate deputy minister responsible for Quebec's Secrétariat à la condition féminine.

She first became involved in the QNW movement in 1990 and was QNW's president from 1998-2004. Ms. Audette has coordinated and handled public relations for numerous Aboriginal events and festivals, and has worked as a researcher for Radio-Canada and Manitou, a production company.

She has also acted in films and on stage.

She has received several prestigious awards, including a Women of Distinction award presented in 2004 under the category Community Involvement.



3.4 Haudenosaunee Women: Traditional Governance As a Model for the Future

KAHENTE HORN-MILLER, DOCTORAL CANDIDATE
CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

I would like to thank the organizers for inviting me. I enjoy every opportunity I get to teach people who do not know much about where I come from a little bit more, to give you a broader understanding and perhaps some ideas that you can apply in your life.

The Haudenosaunee Iroquois Confederacy: Complementary Gender Roles

My talk will be about Haudenosaunee Iroquois women and our involvement in traditional governance, which means that I will take you down the well-worn path of my ancestors. The traditional roles of Haudenosaunee Iroquois Confederacy women were radically different from those of women in European settler society. Among the Haudenosaunee, women were key to the political process. Unlike the settlers, who excluded women from formal participation, seeing them as social burdens and a threat to male power, the Confederacy drew its strength from its use of complementary gender roles. For the Haudenosaunee, males and females were in balance, symbolically represented as the force in the clearing. Males took responsibility for external activities like hunting, trade, and warfare. Females looked after internal activities like agriculture, child rearing, and food processing. Each sex had a spatially separate land base and leadership. Each had its own sphere of political expertise. Male and female were seen as reciprocal parts of a unified whole, not as opposites. And no one would ask why a woman did not think like a man. In other words, women's opinions were not peripheral to male activity. The relationship was interdependent, and to the amazement of the first European observers, women exercised real social, political, and economic power.

Among the Haudenosaunee, women were the ones who determined citizenship. They could decide whether prisoners would live or die. Women controlled land use, adoptions, naming, the selection of diplomatic representatives, and other matters of public concern. Women could even veto a request to go to war, as often happened during the American Revolution and other colonial disputes, where Iroquois alliances were sought.

Misunderstandings from a European Perspective

Interpretations of Haudenosaunee social relations made by early European observers are often wildly incorrect. There has been a persistent tendency to "euro-form" the data, as Barbara Mann would say. She writes, "When the Franciscan and Jesuit missionaries of New France, Canada, as well as the stony-faced puritans of New England and the pragmatic Dutch of New York went to record their triumphs, they simply ignored the women who formed so vibrant a part of Iroquoia" (Mann 2000: 15). They rendered the women as faceless. When the later histories were written using these primary sources, Iroquoian women were consequently nowhere to be found. Their faces had been wiped clean from the record.

The writing of history was a male pursuit in European society. The males who came as colonizers wrote only about the parts of Haudenosaunee society they had access to, and only in relation to their own terms of reference. So the importance of Haudenosaunee women was negated. Even those who understood the Haudenosaunee well enough to be inspired by what they found leapt to false conclusions, coloured by their assumptions that hierarchy and male dominance were natural components to any social order. As a result, the nature of Haudenosaunee women's power is commonly misrepresented and misinterpreted. Those who studied our culture used a conflict-centred approach. This implied a gendered power struggle. Their sexist narratives were founded on assumptions of male supremacy, leading them to interpret male actions in the Iroquoian tradition as being more important than female actions. Women's roles were accordingly devalued and lost to the historical record. The women's movement, which was initially inspired by Indigenous freedom, compounded the misrepresentation, seeing matriarchy instead of reciprocity. This has been accompanied by a reluctance to acknowledge and record the crucial role that Haudenosaunee women played in the development of both feminism and modern egalitarianism. In other words, both American women and men have ignored and misrepresented the influence of Iroquoian women on North American history.

Haudenosaunee Society from an Internal Perspective

Looking at Haudenosaunee women from an internal perspective, we find that traditional society included well-defined and important economic, social, political, and spiritual female roles. The central nature of women is reflected in the record of the *Kaienerekowa* or "Great law of peace," known to European scholars as the Constitution of the Iroquois Confederacy. The Haudenosaunee Confederacy, like the rest of Haudenosaunee society, was based on principles of inclusion, reciprocity, and linking. In the pre-contact era, it united the Kanien'kehá:ka, the Mohawk, Seneca, Onondaga, Cayuga, Oneida, and Tuscarora nations. According to our oral history, the *Kaienerekowa* was brought to the people by the *Tekanawidah*, the peacemaker, and by the woman *Jigonsaseh*, the leader of the cultivators. They met with the people to discuss the warlike habits that were tearing them apart. Once they had gained the consent of all, they implemented a substantial change in the way our society was organized. Much like the League of Nations established several centuries later, the *Kaienerekowa* aimed at replacing conflict and disorder with diplomacy and peace.

The *Kaienerekowa* was not a response to colonialism, as the League of Nations was. It was designed instead to bring about internal harmony, and the importance of *Jigonsaseh* in bringing about this peace should not be overlooked, though it was ignored by most Euro-American scholars. Haudenosaunee peace is based on an egalitarian philosophy. If human relations are equal, the right of each individual to extend or withhold consent must be respected. These principles, equality and consent, are believed to have been learned by observing the natural world, especially the animals. We consider animals as windows on creation. According to our teachings, we must maintain a close, respectful relationship with the plant and animal world to ensure our survival. This profound respect for Mother Earth and her procreative abilities is manifest in the many ceremonies which honour our women. As we sway to and fro, and dance in our longhouse ceremonies, women's feet never leave the earth, symbolically connecting us to our mother.

If the Women Are Powerful, the Nation Is Powerful

The philosophical principles of the *Kaienerekowa* define the roles of men and women. The separate but conjoined roles of women and men ensure peace by balancing power and ensuring mutual respect for our particular responsibilities within the nation. Neither gender is considered the weaker sex—each is necessary and complementary to the other. Women are the central anchor upon which the survival of Haudenosaunee societies depends. If the women are weak, the power of the nation is compromised. There can, for example, be no future if women do not give birth or if they are physically frail or otherwise unable to raise healthy, strong-minded children. In metaphoric terms, we see our society as never-ending circles of life. The first circle is the family. This is the centre of the confederacy. The heart of the family is the mother, because life comes from her. When our circle extends, it extends to the larger family, which is the clan. Next, the circle extends to the community, and then further to the nation. This is what we think of when we say, “If the women are powerful, the nation is powerful.” This conceptualization of a woman’s procreative abilities is also celebrated and deeply imbedded in the economic, political, and spiritual aspects of our culture.

Political Processes: “Pounding Corn”

The image of the squaw is alien to us. It reflects the exploitive Euro-American treatment of women as sex objects. Our traditions value and respect women. Even the post-contact records demonstrate that Haudenosaunee women were crucial to the success of intercultural relations. We helped establish contacts with other nations. We acted as interpreters, diplomats, and guides. We contributed to the food supply of the forts and maintained the agricultural surplus that was necessary to nurture alliances, based on the distribution of gifts.

The traditional domain of women as outlined in the *Kaienerekowa* includes the legal authority to adjudicate disputes, to determine clan membership through lineal descent or adoption, to confer and remove chieftainship titles, to decide on land use and to decide whether or not to go to war. These and other functions are inter-related. We work together with our men to form a spiritually, socially, and politically cohesive whole. Our political processes include no concept of majority rule; they are represented instead by the metaphor of “pounding corn.” Political decisions are reached through a complex and ritualized process of group discussions, first by the women of the clan, then by the women of the nation. When the women reach consensus, a question is passed to the men who discuss first by clan, then by nation until consensus is reached as a whole. If consensus is not reached, questions may be sent back for further consideration, or they may be discussed in a mixed group of men and women. Contentious issues may be passed back and forth from group to group several times. Everyone must contribute their kernel of understanding, like corn in a mortar. Varying political, social, and spiritual ideas are ground together through the constant repetitive movement produced by the back and forth process of discussion. Just as the outer shell of the corn is crushed by the pounding of the pestle, so too, the barriers that define individual perspectives are broken down through discussion. But they are not rejected—they become incorporated in a unified whole that represents the opinions of the men and the women of all the constituent clans and nations mixed together. By this means, the life-giving kernels are consolidated, so we can say our minds are one.

Discussions begin with the *odiyaner*, the clan mothers. They set the path of the culture. Our women in general are politically active and powerful. Their traditional council *Gaustauyee* is in the heart of Seneca country, although this was usually overlooked in Euro-American accounts of our culture. Patriarchal Europeans saw only the men's council that met at Onondaga. Women do not sit on the men's council, but they are present at all discussions. Many times in the historical record, women are described as being at the periphery of grand council discussions. Europeans assumed that this meant that they did not participate. In reality, they were the eyes and ears of the women's council. They paid close attention to what was happening and reported back to their council. The men were not chiefs in the English sense of the word. They were *royaner* (spokesman), they followed the paths set by the women, and if they failed to do so, they were discharged or removed from office.

The gate-keeping role of women was crucial in times of war. We helped maintain clear-headed decision making, by preventing emotions from becoming overwhelming. Women had the final say in sending the nation's men into battle. This was and still is allegorically represented by the women's responsibility for making moccasins and providing travel provisions for the men. If they did not provide them, the men could not go to war.

Egalitarian Diplomacy

As a bearer of Haudenosaunee culture, and going by my experience, I have no reason to doubt that ours is a culture of peace. We have attempted to maintain peace through centuries of extreme adversity, brought on by European contact and invasion. According to the *Kaienerekowa*, a man cannot even sit as a *royaner* on the council if he has killed someone. Yet, it is commonly assumed that all the men of my people, the Kanienkehá:ka—also known as Mohawks—, are warriors. This has happened through the projection of European cultural values onto Indigenous society. Throughout North America, the *Ongwehonwe*, the original peoples, were subjected to an onslaught of similar pressures, policies, and confrontations. Before contact, our standard of living was higher than that of the common people in Europe, as the accounts of the first colonists attest. Before the Europeans got around to introducing iron tools, textiles, and guns, they introduced new diseases that spread across the continent before actual contact. The immune systems of most of my ancestors were not equipped to resist these diseases, and it is estimated that well over 95% of the population died. This catastrophe resulted in the serious loss of cultural knowledge, weakening the traditional structure of our societies and causing widespread demoralization. When direct contact finally did occur, we were in a vulnerable state, ill-equipped to cope with intentional massacres and other unfriendly gestures of the European interlopers.

In keeping with the principles of inclusiveness and reciprocity that govern our culture, the Haudenosaunee attempted to establish diplomatic relations with all colonists. But Europeans were not familiar with Indigenous models of egalitarian diplomacy. They attempted to involve us in their eternal wars, struggling for dominance over each other and everyone else. In order to gain control of our lands and resources, colonial agents attempted to pit the individual nations of the Confederacy against one another, aggravating differences and forcing the nations to cover over the Confederacy's central fire in times of war. In our weakened state, European ideals slowly began to infiltrate the Haudenosaunee

social fabric, and we became divided by the multiple associations that began with our attempts to establish chains of alliance.

Disruption of a Way of Life

Each of the symbiotic European institutions of church and state contributed to the weakening of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, ultimately affecting the roles of women. Our traditions were seen as the impediment that prevented us from becoming civilized. In fact, they interfered with European attempts to dominate and to appropriate all of our resources. The missionaries capitalized on our misfortunes, discrediting our traditional spiritual beliefs and promising survival if conversion occurred. European concepts of land ownership and gender roles were imposed along with European agricultural customs. This created conflict between Haudenosaunee men and women, who no longer drew upon the complementary roles once represented by the rotation of the clearing in the forest in our traditional culture.

Our custom of living communally in the longhouses of our clan mothers was disrupted, and replaced by the missionary ideal of male-dominated nuclear families, living in separate housing. The longhouse is a political symbol as well as a way of life. It represents the means by which we women express ourselves and partake in our traditional roles. The demise of the longhouse facilitated the demise of related traditions, and changed the ethic of sharing and reciprocity, characteristic of our culture.

Imposing a Patriarchal Social Structure

The missionary settlements eventually evolved into the reservation system, constructed by colonial administrators who sought to physically constrain Indigenous movement. Canada's *Indian Act* imposed a patriarchal social structure, and our male representatives were left with no choice. We had been forced into poverty. We had to accept foreign policies if we wanted to survive. But the colonizers did not want us to survive—they expected us all to die out. As recently as the 1950s, my mother was told by the nuns at her school that she belonged to a dying race. She was only 6 years old at the time.

The *Indian Act* with its blatantly patriarchal ideology is particularly offensive to us as women. It appropriates our traditional authority over who belongs to our nation through the imposition of an alien definition of Indian status and band membership. Moreover, our original veto authority has been replaced by that of the superintendent of Indian Affairs. My people, the Haudenosaunee, are matrilineal: according to our tradition, the men left their communities to live with the family of their partner. Children belonged to their mother's clan and village. Women determined who could be adopted to replace loved ones. In essence, we determined the citizenship of our communities as well as the policies used to govern.

A Strong Sense of Cultural Identity

Indigenous society will only regain the power and vitality it once enjoyed when the respect due to our women is restored. We must leave behind popular media stereotypes like the noble savage, the bloodthirsty warrior, the Indian princess, and the alcohol-ravaged squaw. The feminist movement of the last century has little to offer us. It is generally a Euro-American movement. As such, it is focussed on equality between the sexes, framing success in individual terms defined by foreign male-dominated culture. There is no parallel

movement among Indigenous women. We are working with our men to try to survive. As Haudenosaunee women, we have an important contribution to make. The governments of both Canada and the United States act at all levels according to policies that ignore our traditional political structures, and the importance of women in them. The Haudenosaunee Confederacy offers a positive role model. It is what the Europeans were looking for when they finally began to realize the folly of war and established the League of Nations.

The colonial world has come a long way since then. So have we. Our culture is not static. It is a blend of the past, the present, and the future. As increasing numbers of our people obtain postsecondary education in colonial institutions, we are creating Haudenosaunee writers, athletes, scholars, and musicians. We are adapting in a changing world while remaining faithful to our Indigenous principles and perspectives. We believe that our traditional customs based on equality and mutual respect have a lot to offer others. People all over the world are beginning to agree. Perhaps, some day, Canada and the United States will take up the offer made by *Kanesatako* in the 1700s, and come to study in our schools. Our history is your history, and by ignoring it, you ignore something about yourself. I think that *Jigonsaseh* would agree with me when I propose that power comes from knowing and realizing our true past.

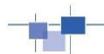
If you are connected to identity, you are whole and strong. The next step is to learn how to work with our communities and help our people to survive. A strong sense of cultural identity is what supports modern Haudenosaunee women, helping us to find a balance between the mechanistic forces of modern technology and the life forces of older traditions. It is from here that we can move into the 21st century as strong peoples.

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Biography

KAHENTE HORN-MILLER is a Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) of the Bear Clan at Kahnawake (Quebec). She is a mother and a Ph.D. candidate in the Humanities Doctoral Program at Concordia University. She also works with the Kahnawake Schools Diabetes Prevention Project (KSDPP) as a Research Assistant. Her doctoral thesis, entitled *A Nation without a State: Kahnawake, Citizenship and the Challenge of Indigenous Self-Determination in Canada* will focus on the issues of Indigenous nationalism, political membership, citizenship, and identity politics. Her research interests include Indigenous nationalism, identity, Iroquois culture and politics, Indigenous physical and community health, and Indigenous artistic expression.



Fourth Part

Governing for Social Change

4.1 Let Me Tell You a Story: the Legacy of Dorothy McDonald, a Straight-Talking Leader

CORA VOYAGEUR, PROFESSOR
UNIVERSITÉ DE CALGARY

I am very happy to be here today—thank you for the invitation. My paper is about a woman whom I interviewed as part of my research on women chiefs in Canada. It was written for an Alberta history magazine called *The Legacy Magazine* and meant for a lay audience.

I am a First Nations woman from a small isolated community in northeastern Alberta, called Fort Chipewyan. Our claim to fame in Fort Chipewyan is that we are the oldest European settlement in Alberta. Our community was established in 1788 by Northwest Company traders. Fort Chipewyan is located on Lake Athabasca, at the end of the Athabasca River. This point becomes important when I tell you about Dorothy McDonald, a woman who was very influential in my life.

Women Chiefs in Canada

But firstly, I will give you a few data from my research project on women chiefs, which I initiated in 2001. I began the project by interviewing 64 of these chiefs from across Canada. My principal question was whether they believed that being a woman made a difference in their experiences as a chief. I also collected information on their background and education. I found that more than 75% of these women came from what I call politically involved families where primarily male relatives were in leadership. In general, these women were well-educated. In mainstream society, about 40% to 42% of women have some form of postsecondary education. In the case of these particular women, up to 60% had had formal training, ranging from political science to administration, social work, and law. The women I interviewed were generally middle-aged, about 45 years old. They were sandwiched between their children (sometimes grandchildren) and ageing parents, negotiating multiple roles as women, mothers, administrators, mediators, liaisons, community representatives, and decision makers. The responsibilities that they had as family members seemed to be mirrored in their work and carried forward into their communities.

In Canada, First Nations people live under the *Indian Act*, an archaic piece of legislation developed shortly after Confederation, which governs virtually every aspect of First Nations people's lives. Among its paternalistic and patriarchal rules, this legislation prescribed that only Indian men could be chief. However, changes to the *Indian Act* in 1951 meant that Indian women were finally allowed to hold the office of chief. Elsie Knott of the Curve Lake First Nation in Ontario made history when she became the first woman chief in 1952.

Since the 1990s, there has been a significant increase in the number of women chiefs across the country. According to the Assembly of First Nations, the national political organization representing 637 First Nations, approximately 90 (or 15%) of the Indian chiefs in Canada are women. Although this number has increased over the years, it is still lower than that of female representation at both the provincial and the federal levels.

Portrait of a Leader: Dorothy McDonald

At the Provincial Museum of Alberta, an exhibit called *The Syncrude Gallery of Aboriginal Peoples* addresses the last 12,000 years of Aboriginal occupation in the Alberta area. On the poster for the exhibit, a caption reads, “Come, let me tell you a story.” I will tell you a story about Dorothy McDonald, the former chief of the Fort McKay Indian First Nation. She was a dedicated, gutsy, straight-talking leader, who took unpopular stands on controversial issues. She cared about the land, when many others did not. She was a First Nations woman who would not be bullied, not by industry, not by government, not by local politics.

She was the first woman to lead her First Nation. As chief, she followed in the footsteps of women such as Martha Gladue of the Beaver Lake First Nation, near Lac La Biche in central Alberta, or Theresa Gadwa, of the Kehewin First Nation on the Alberta-Saskatchewan border, near Bonnyville. They took up the challenge of Indian leadership in the 1960s. At times, during her tenure, Dorothy was the only female chief of Alberta’s then 42 First Nations.

Fort McKay First Nation

The community that Dorothy McDonald led, the Fort McKay First Nation, is located in the vast Treaty 8² territory in Alberta. In the 1899 agreement, First Nations surrendered a tract of land about three-quarters the size of the Province of Ontario to Queen Victoria’s representatives. This resource-rich area stretches across parts of the three western provinces and the Northwest Territories, and contains resources including the tar sands, natural gas, oil, timber, and diamonds. The presence of oil in this region has been known ever since Canadian explorer Alexander McKenzie’s 1793 writings mentioned tar and oil oozing from the banks of the Athabasca River. These tar sands would cause a whirlwind of change for the Indigenous peoples living on its banks some 170 years later.

Dorothy McDonald was born to Philip and Victoria McDonald in the 1940s as the fifth of ten children. Her childhood summers were spent at a fishing camp located on the future site of the Great Canadian Oil Sands plant, where her family and other community members would fish, hunt, and pick berries. As she remembers, “There was an abundance of ducks, fish, and moose, and the Athabasca River was clear, and the air was fresh. We rowed a boat to Fort McMurray and it would seem you could see the bottom of the river because the water was so clear.” (Voyageur 2005:357).

This was when Dorothy McDonald developed her strong commitment to protecting the environment. Her isolated community of Fort McKay, named after an early Hudson’s Bay company employee, is located 65 kilometres north of Fort McMurray, Alberta, and did not have an all-weather road until the late 1960s. Prior to the road, the trek to Fort McMurray involved a 4-hour boat ride in the summer. In winter, community members travelled an ice road after hailing taxis from Fort McMurray, using the community’s only telephone, a mobile phone that was located at the Fort McKay Hudson’s Bay store.

² Editor’s note: Under *Treaty No. 8*, signed in 1899, Canada’s federal government acquired Aboriginal lands located in the northern regions of the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan and in the south-central portion of the Northwest Territories.

Coping with Change: “Continuing the Family Business”

Dorothy lived her first 14 years in Fort McKay. She attended the Fort McKay Indian Day School until halfway through Grade 8, when both she and her sisters contracted tuberculosis and were placed in the Charles Camsell Hospital in Edmonton. This was the first time she had ever been in a community larger than Fort McMurray, which had approximately 1,200 residents at the time. Dorothy and Elsie were visited by their brother and their father during their one-year stay. After her release from the hospital, Dorothy boarded with a family in Edmonton and completed a high-school diploma at St. Joseph’s High School. She later attended Alberta Vocational School in Greward, Alberta. Life in Fort McKay had changed dramatically during her 10-year absence. Prior to major development in the region, Fort McKay band members lived a traditional life and earned their living primarily off the land, although they did engage in seasonal wage labour. The village, in her absence, had been connected to the outside world by an all-weather road, which brought industry and people to Fort McKay.

McDonald came from a long lineage of leadership. Her father Phil McDonald was a hereditary chief who led his community for more than 25 years. Dorothy was elected to four terms of office. She loved and admired her father for his integrity and his concern for the community. As she recalls, “He worked hard for the community, but the Government just simply was not listening.” During her tenure she witnessed environmental and community changes that had begun during her father’s term.

Her move to leadership after her father’s death seemed a natural thing for her to do. It was like continuing the family business, as she would refer to it. Remembering the changes her community had to cope with, she says, “The people were not prepared for all the changes that came with industry: the increased traffic, the logging trucks, the noise and the pollution.” She felt that it was her duty to look out for the best interests of her community and she would ensure that the industry addressed environmental concerns. This sometimes made her a thorn in the side of industry.

Protecting the Environment

Dorothy insisted on environmental assessments for new resource developments and challenged the energy resources conservation board decisions on future development projects in the region. In June 1981, the Fort McKay band opposed construction of a road that was being built for drilling access north of the community. Construction was halted, and one year later, the band intervened in a planned expansion of Suncor operations. This brought the First Nation’s voice to the forefront with government and industry. Her leadership and her commitment to the environment led her to be featured in a Health and Welfare Canada video production entitled *Many Branches* in the early 1990s.

While chief, McDonald strove to preserve cultural aspects by documenting the old ways through a series of interviews with community elders. The elders were saddened by the loss of traditional livelihood and felt that the environment should be protected. One concern was the quality of fish. As attested by a *Fort McMurray Today* newspaper article, a warning against eating fish from the Athabasca River was put into effect.

In 1992, McDonald personally brought charges against the neighbouring Suncor oil sands plant. The Attorney General later added an additional fifteen charges under the *Fisheries Act* and the *Clean Water Act*. The company had been spilling oil grease and chemicals into the Athabasca River, without informing the Government or the Fort McKay band members who had been taking their water from the river. Newspaper accounts tell of the plant discharging 50 times the allowed amount of effluent into the river. The following year, the provincial court found the company guilty of violations under the *Fisheries Act*, while charges under the *Clean Water Act* were dismissed. Suncor was charged 8,000 dollars in fines.

Balancing Traditional Lifestyles and Employment Opportunities

Under McDonald's guidance, the community obtained much-needed infrastructure that had been unavailable to her band during her father's term. A band office, a nursing station, a fire hall, a fire truck, and a community hall were all part of McDonald's legacy. Capitalizing on funding opportunities to move the community forward, McDonald established the Fort McMurray group of companies. These were six companies that held contracts for services to the resource centre that now generated millions of dollars for the Fort McMurray First Nation. She also negotiated employment opportunities for band members with companies working in the region. She implemented a three-pronged initiative to help her community control its future, consisting in protection of traditional lifestyles for hunters and trappers, establishment of an economic base to move the community forward, and better employment and training opportunities for the community.

Dorothy was skilful at furthering her people's cause through the media. This was especially evident when she and her band members set up a roadblock to protest logging trucks that were hauling through her community, thus halting logging operations north of the community. The owners of the company and the truckers threatened charges against her for obstructing a highway, with a maximum penalty of six months in prison or a 500-dollar fine. However, none of the protesters were charged.

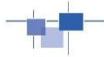
When I spoke with Dorothy about her legacy, she remarked, "You cannot take things away from people like the land and the culture without leaving a gap. Some of these people were really hurt and the community must heal." However, she was optimistic about the community, considering it as being in transition. "There is always hope and a light at the end of the tunnel. I am confident that with the Creator's help, the community will come through this rough part."

Reference

VOYAGEUR CORA. 2005. The Called Her Chief: A Tribute to Fort MacKays's Indomitable Leader, Dorothy McDonald, in S. Carter, L. Erickson, P. Roome and C. Smith (Eds.), *Unsettled Pasts. Reconceiving the West Through Women's History*: 355-363. Calgary: University of Calgary Press.

Biography

DR. CORA VOYAGEUR is an associate professor in the Sociology Department at the University of Calgary. Her research focuses on the Aboriginal experience in Canada that includes women's issues, politics, employment, media, and economic development. She has conducted extensive community-initiated research with many First Nations and Aboriginal organizations and is currently completing a manuscript on Female Indian chiefs in Canada.



4.2 A Familiar Theme: Female Leadership

LINDA JEAN, CHIEF
MI'GMAQ NATION OF GESPEG

Ladies and gentlemen, I am very happy to participate in this conference. I want to thank the DIALOG network and Quebec Native Women (QNW) and all of the organizers who have given us the opportunity to meet together today. The theme of my talk is very close to my heart, because it is something that is part of my daily life and, I'm sure, also part of yours: leadership, governing and transforming society.

When I was asked to speak about my experience as a woman leader of a community, I had to think quite a lot about how to approach the topic of female leadership in the Aboriginal context. What does it mean to be a woman in my community—the small Mi'gmaq community of Gespeg, on the Gaspé Peninsula? What does it mean to be a woman chief in 2005? What are some of the necessary assets that enable us, as Aboriginal women, to reach a leadership position? And then, what are some of the necessary assets that enable us to carry out this role in the day-to-day life of a community? What are my greatest challenges? And so on. All of these questions influenced my thinking. First, I'll briefly talk about my story as chief of my community. Then, I'll take a general look at the latest theories on leadership and, finally, I'll apply these theories to what I see as the challenges that we women face today as Aboriginal chiefs or leaders.

My Story As Chief of my Community

The community that I represent has more than 700 members. It is located on Mi'gmaq ancestral lands, which is now the point of the Gaspé Peninsula. Our situation is quite distinct because we are one of the only communities for which the government did not set aside lands for our use. The system of governance as we know it in the *Indian Act* was established in 1972, the year when the federal government officially recognized and created the Gespeg band. Since its creation, four chiefs have governed Gespeg. During my first mandate, in 1994, I was 37 years old. This was the period after Bill C-31, when it was hard for Aboriginal women to be recognized by their own brothers as members of their own communities. So you can imagine: the first woman to be elected, a product of Bill C-31.

I went into my first band council meeting very determined and very well prepared. I was convinced that my management experience could enable me to do many things. But I have to tell you that I was quickly put in my place. The people I was working with were all members of my family, that is, my mother's brothers. At that time, the band council was made up of three people. The first thing they said to me was: "You're only a 6(2). Us, we're 6(1)s." At that time, I didn't know what "only a 6(2)"³ was. But I learned pretty quickly. All of this to say that I left my first meeting in tears; and I cried a number of times after that. But now, when I think about all this, I feel that that meeting gave me the ambition, courage and desire to continue on.

³ See Editorial Note on page 3.

And now, in 2005, I'm older, I have more knowledge, and I'm a grandmother. I have another person in my life, who has radically changed many things and who has given me so much happiness. All of this makes me want to accomplish things even more. But organizations, governments and societies are becoming more and more complex, so we have to deal with that as well. Heading a band council or a government today is increasingly demanding; we have to take into account our ever-more diversified populations; the administrations around us are more and more complex; we have to consider political, legal and technological factors; and we have to continually assess the risks of our decisions and understand the long-term consequences of our actions for the community. Today, being a good leader doesn't only mean being a good administrator; it means being able to mobilize people to work toward the achievement of common goals. It's like the captain of a ship, who inspires others when everyone is tired and who tries to guide others toward a destination.

Recent Leadership Theories

The most popular recent leadership theories talk a lot about motivation. I'd just like to add that for the past several years, management and performance studies have shown that emotional intelligence is a necessary component of leadership. Without it, a person can have the best education in the world, or the best ideas, or be able to analyze columns and columns of data, but that doesn't make them a great leader. Essentially, what leaders are being asked to do today is to complement their rationality with other qualities, such as self-awareness, self-control, motivation, empathy and interpersonal skills.

Out of all these studies and theories, I want to highlight two elements that are relevant to my experience as a chief: self-confidence and the communication of one's vision. Why self-confidence? Because women are not less good leaders than men are; on the contrary. We often hear about different leadership styles in women and men; I've also noticed in my relations with other chiefs and political leaders in the country that there is indeed a difference. But I often come to the conclusion that this difference in style is due to the past and the personal histories of the chiefs rather than to the fact that they are men or women. I don't know if you've noticed that when a woman speaks out loudly, we say that she has a male management style and that she's aggressive, when she is actually simply asserting herself. These women leaders are asserting themselves because they have confidence in what they feel, they have confidence in their ideas and they have confidence in themselves. For too long, men have given themselves power over women, without any just reason.

The case of Bill C-31 is an example of this. An Aboriginal woman who married a non-Aboriginal man lost her Aboriginal rights and her identity, whereas a white woman who married an Aboriginal man was given her rights, because the man was stronger; he was a 6(1). For us, and for a number of other communities, the man was the official authority figure. The *Indian Act* reinforced this authority, if only through the membership rules. Also, the authority of the European male influenced our conceptions of men and women. When I was young, I remember my father sitting at the head of the table and, for us, this showed that he was the man, the head of the family. We respected this authority and I still respect it today. On the other hand, we little girls weren't taught to have confidence in ourselves in order to one day become such an authority. So, for me, being a woman and becoming chief of my Nation was a real challenge. We have to reverse this tendency and believe in

what we have to say; we have to believe that we can lead our community as well as anyone else in the direction that we feel it should be going.

If I am where I am today, it's thanks to my mother, and I believe that all of you are here today thanks to a grandmother or your mother, and we are going to continue this tradition. My mother was told by the men in our community: "You'll never have your rights, you married a 'White,' so deal with it." But look, we're here today and we'll continue to be, in force. More and more, our voices are being listened to. I feel that women have a transparency that men do not have. That's my own opinion. So we should never let ourselves be put down by anyone, because we are our own persons.

Leadership in One's Community: Great Challenges for Aboriginal Women

Now, let's look at communication: how can we convey our message in a way that people can identify with it? Being a good political leader also means being able to understand important issues for citizens and members, and being able to present and communicate them to members in simple and easily understandable terms in order to build consensus around a guiding idea. Why am I going to speak at length about communication? A good political leader must have a vision, and this vision must be understood by the members, by the people around the leader, whether these be the band councillors around the council table or the members. We have to make sure that people understand our vision. For a change to happen, people have to understand the issues and be able to identify with them. This requires a particular effort that is not always evident. In our community, we don't have a specialized communication or public relations firm. Nor do we have the financial resources to call upon these specialized firms every time we have a members' meeting. So it's up to us, as the Nation's representatives, to put special efforts into finding ways to convey our ideas in order to be able to exercise our leadership. That's one of the hardest things to do. Everyone can talk, but it's harder than you think to communicate with and influence a group of people to follow you in your ideas.

You may tell me that, in Aboriginal politics, you often have family members supporting you out of principle. But when you're the chief, you're the chief of all of your community, of all the families. To convince other families that your ideas are good ones, that you see your community advancing along one path rather than another, you have to be well equipped and well prepared. In my experience, you cannot convince people by force. In any case, that's no longer true today. Our members are increasingly well informed about what's happening elsewhere. Our members have specific needs and, at times, very different political concerns. To exercise your leadership, you have to be able to understand what people want, figure out your members' needs and listen to and hear the reasons behind their concerns. If you don't tell them anything or consult them, you are fostering distrust.

We are fortunate to have a membership code specific to our Nation, implemented in 1986 thanks to people who had a vision and the courage to say that it is not Indian and Northern Affairs Canada that will tell us who is Indian and who is not. We're currently changing our membership code because the community has evolved. We've hired a person from our community whose responsibility is, simply put, to consult all the members of our community to find out what they want. This will give women who were not able to express themselves before the chance to say what they want to see in a membership code. We mustn't forget that a membership code is a code for all members, made by the members. I

want our people to be well informed when the time comes to vote in the referendum slated for the month of May. People in our community will have to decide who will be recognized as a member, and will be proud to say that they obtained the information in terms that everyone understands. That's so important. Our membership code was almost a myth before 1995, even though it was there.

Being a Leader

In conclusion, being a leader means, first and foremost, putting your energies into working for the common good of your Nation, community, organization or company. I would also say that it means working to ensure not that history remembers you, but that your work survives after you. Also, if things don't go well, accept the responsibility, learn your lessons and share these lessons with others. Acknowledging a mistake allows us to grow, all of us together. Making mistakes is human; it's not the end of the world. Also, trust in what you are, in what you think and feel. Reflect about what you believe is good for your community and share this with others. Communicate your ideas, and keep repeating them every way you can and in every forum you can, so that not only will people listen to you and hear you but they will also understand you. Thank you very much.

Biography

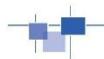
LINDA JEAN comes from the Mi'gmaq community of Gespeg (Quebec).

Actively involved since 1985, she was elected chief in 1992 and held this position for four and a half years.

She was also the first woman to head the Gespeg Band Council.

After her first term in office (1992-1996), she worked as the manager of a local cable television firm before being re-elected chief in 2003.

She was also president of the Gespeg local Native women's association from 1989 to 1992.



4.3 My Personal Journey: Multicultural Contacts, Curiosity, an Identity Crisis, and Status of Women

DOREEN PICARD, STUDENT LIFE ANIMATOR
MIKISIW HIGH SCHOOL, OPITCIWAN

Kwé! Hello! I'm very glad to be here today to share my vision and my professional experience as a youth representative. I've had the opportunity to work for QNW, and I'm very proud to participate in its 30th anniversary celebrations.

How does one transform and govern a society? For young people, leadership is very important and is only beginning. Over the past 30 years, the women who worked for the cause showed great perseverance, and it's difficult for us to follow the movement because, as young people, we're only more or less aware of what's happening.

I'd like to first tell you about my personal journey. I work at a high school with the Atikamekw in Opitciwan, a very isolated community in the bush. Before I went to Opitciwan, I travelled a great deal and had the opportunity to encounter different cultures; I went to Egypt, India and Mongolia. By being with people of different cultures, I became aware of my identity as a young person. I'm only 26 years old. As I travelled, I asked myself: "Who am I?" I'm certainly curious about other cultures but, even though I know where I come from, I asked questions about my identity. I believe I experienced the kind of identity crisis that many young people go through at some point or another. My curiosity then led me to get involved in various programs and to apply for grants. I was quite determined and took advantage of all the opportunities offered to me. That's when I learned about the QNW movement. I applied to them for financial support so that I could participate in the Canada World Youth program. I must have been 19 at the time. At 19, I didn't know about QNW and I don't think I was the only one.

Then, in 2001, I participated in a seminar on leadership, Kanikanitet organized by QNW. That's when I learned about the Association and the various dossiers it is responsible for. That's also when I realized that women, young women, have their own particular issues and that we are different from men. As young people, we're not really aware of the differences on the level of social issues. Later, in 2002, QNW created the position of youth coordinator and I got the job. But again, I had to deal with my lack of knowledge about QNW. When I began the job, I had my own office, a pencil, no computer, and no documentation. Where do I start? At that point, I said to myself: "My God! What am I getting myself into?" My colleagues at work gave me a lot of support.

A First Project: Training on Aboriginal Law to Foster Familiarity with the *Indian Act*

I then had the opportunity to learn more about the various dossiers, although not in depth. The first project that I developed involved training on Aboriginal law. This project was a great success. In preparing for it and doing the necessary reading, I realized that I, as a young woman, knew nothing about the *Indian Act*, since both of my parents are Aboriginal, I didn't know about the existence of 6(2) or 6(1)⁴. At that moment, I felt that it was very

⁴ See Editorial Note on page 3.

important for young people, both men and women, to learn about this legislation. So that was the aim of this training on Aboriginal law.

Another Important Project: the Gathering of Young Quebec Aboriginal Women

Afterwards, as time went on, the president asked about my life philosophy, and what I thought about things. She asked me: “Do you consider yourself a feminist?” I was afraid of the word. She asked me to come to her office and read the definition of the word “feminist.” I was even afraid to read the definition! I think that young people today still don’t realize that we have important issues to work on. I’ll be a mother soon, and that gets me thinking about what lies ahead—what I’ll be able to experience as a woman—and I see the issues connected with the loss of Aboriginal identity. This is something that we have to work very hard on.

Another important event that I developed was the gathering of young Quebec Aboriginal women in March 2004, a first in Quebec and Canada. We assembled more than 45 young women, elders from each nation, and the members of the QNW board of directors, for a total of over 85 people. This event was a wonderful success. When I began as youth coordinator and there had never been a gathering of young women, there had been little documentation and few recommendations. So we got together so that young women could express their own concerns and reflect on possible solutions, which was the aim of the gathering. The report on this gathering is today considered a bible, as it contains the comments made by young people and the recommendations that they felt should be implemented.

My Personal Mandate: Strengthening the QNW Youth Council and Implementing Its Recommendations

As QNW youth representative, I have assumed the mandate of following up on this gathering and strengthening the QNW Youth Council, since we are the next generation of leaders. It’s important to meet, work together and take advantage of the transfer of knowledge by QNW members, members of the board of directors, elders and past presidents. Through this youth council, we hope to implement the recommendations made by the participants at the March 2004 gathering. This is the mission that the QNW Youth Council has taken on.

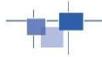
In conclusion, transforming and governing society is something that is still very new for young people because, being young, we are less educated, less informed and less aware. But over the years, by taking advantage of training and participating in programs, I believe that this can change, as it did for me. Thank you for listening.

Biography

Originally from Betsiamites (Quebec), DOREEN PICARD is now student life officer at Mikisiw high school in the Atikamek community of Opitciwan.

She is known for the expertise she has gained through her intercultural and community experiences in several countries, which led her to become interested in the development of Aboriginal youth and in working to improve their situation.

The path she has taken and her energy provide a new lens for QNW, where she represents young women.



Fifth Part

Reconciling Identity, Culture and Education

5.1 Reconciling Identity, Culture and Education

MARCELLINE PICARD-KANAPÉ, PRINCIPAL
UASHKAIKAN SECONDARY SCHOOL, BETSIAMITES

Hello to all the women from all the nations who are here in this room. And thank you to the Mohawk Nation for receiving us on its territory. I'd also like to thank Quebec Native Women and the DIALOG network for inviting me to this colloquium. I congratulate all the pioneers from the early days and the women who followed in their footsteps, right up to today. These women have achieved some fantastic successes and I thank them for their perseverance. The work isn't finished yet, but I think we can continue on the same path of success.

In 1972, I was a teacher when I was asked to speak at an educators' conference in the Sept-Îles region. They asked me to talk about culture; I really didn't know what I was going to say about it. In those years, it was rare for anyone to be interested in our culture, our language, our experience and our customs. And we weren't very many Innu teachers in the Sept-Îles region. My initial reaction was to decline the invitation, but they said to me: "This is the first time an Aboriginal person is being asked to speak: you can't refuse; we'll help you out." Everyone was ready to help me. So we ended up presenting something. And I've travelled along this path ever since; I gathered more and more information and made it one of my goals to always learn more about how people experience their culture and identity. Gatherings like this one today help me a lot because I don't know everything; I'm still learning.

I've been working in education for nearly 40 years. I've seen three successive generations of children, of adolescents, on the benches of high school classrooms. I've also seen a lot of changes: major changes in young people's behaviour, in the way children are raised, and tremendous social changes. It's alarming the number of changes there have been between 1959 and today. The underlying causes are many. Some changes have been beneficial, and others are becoming more and more detrimental to our people. The most important of these changes is parents' distancing from their adolescents. When children are small, we take great interest in them; we guide and supervise them. But in adolescence, parents begin to withdraw, especially mothers who relinquish their parental authority.

On the level of their identity, our young people really need to be guided and reassured. School isn't the only authority that can play this role; parents also have to show young people what identity is. Are the residential schools to blame for parents being unable to fully perform their role, since they didn't have examples to follow when they were at these schools? Is it because technology has come to us too quickly? Parents haven't mastered technology as quickly as children have. Many young people tell me: "I'm not feeling too good this morning because I was on the computer until 4 a.m. My parents were asleep and I didn't see what time it was." I understand them.

Should we question the way we're teaching young people? At school, Euro-Canadian values predominate over Aboriginal values, especially at the high school level because of the curriculum that has to be respected and the ministerial exams. Parents ask us: "Don't do too much Montagnais language or culture, because my child needs French,

mathematics, English, science, and so on, or he won't pass his year. He won't be graded on Aboriginal culture on the exams."

Identity Is a Matter of Faith and Experience

We really have to think a lot about the causes that explain why our young people are caught in a dilemma, caught between two worlds. We all know that identity isn't only a matter of an Indian card; and it's not because we have a band number that we have our Aboriginal identity. It's a matter of faith. It's a matter of experience. Identity really is experience. Each human being needs to know who he or she is and where he or she comes from in order to go forward, follow their life journey and be happy. I recently read about a young girl who was adopted, who was always led to believe she was Mexican. But she felt bad because she couldn't find her roots. She ended up learning she was of Innu origin and, today, this woman has blossomed because she has found her roots, which confirmed her identity. She now divides her time between her Quebec family and her Innu family.

It is in this spirit of helping young people regain their identity that I oversaw the writing of a book, in Betsiamites. Our young people didn't know where they came from or what their parents had done. This book changed the young people's perspectives somewhat because they now know where they come from, what their parents have done and experienced to reach the point we are at today, why we live on a reserve, etc. We unfortunately haven't had time yet to work on the pedagogical portion. I intend to ask the band council to put this book on the school curriculum when the pedagogical part is completed.

Women Are Agents of Change

When identity is firmly anchored, culture becomes something real and not folkloric; because culture can become folklore. Then, everything else falls into place: education, career and the pride of belonging to a great Nation that has had its ups and downs, but has always come through. We've said it already: women can be and always have been agents of change. They are the only ones who can change the course of history. Changes are up to us as women, because we raise the children. We have a major role in change, a role that to this day, we haven't dared to assume. This is in fact what Chief Linda Jean said; very few women are chiefs, but we have shown that it is possible for a woman to become a chief, and for more than one mandate. Now, it's up to young women to take their place. It isn't easy, but young women today certainly have that capacity.

Aboriginal women have lived through the worst disasters, and have always managed to get back on their feet, adapt, and tackle new challenges successfully. The challenge this time is a sizeable one. And it is up to us women to face it. Yes, I believe that we can reconcile identity, culture and education. A number of Aboriginal people are proof of this; there are even several women in this room who are fully living their identity, who have quite an advanced education and who are fighting for women's well-being. We don't have any barriers holding us back on that level. We can do it.

Strong Measures to Enhance Our Communities' Awareness

Many of our fellow citizens are growing and advancing within the dominant culture and are very comfortable with this: they are growing and advancing with their Aboriginal identity and culture. So we have a mission, when we go back to our communities, to convince our sisters, because the time for action is now. There are so many people who are no longer on the band lists because they've become 6(3)s, 6(4)s, 6(5)s. It's up to us to fight for these situations to change. For example, it's not normal to have to name the father of one's child to have the child's Aboriginal identity recognized. No other nation has to go through that. Why do we put up with it? Too few people know about this or too many people don't want to know about it. We need strong measures to make people more aware. Each of us will have to take on this mission when we go back to our communities. We'll have to tell them that we need to roll up our sleeves and get to work. Thank you.

Biography

MARCELLINE PICARD-KANAPÉ is a key figure on the contemporary Aboriginal scene. She has become especially well known as a First Nations educator since the late 1950s.

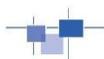
Marcelline Picard-Kanapé comes from the Innu community of Betsiamites (Quebec). She studied at Chicoutimi's École Normale du Bon-Conseil and, at the age of 18, became Québec's first Innu teacher; she subsequently obtained her bachelor's degree in Education from Université du Québec à Chicoutimi.

She was also the very first Aboriginal person to sit on Québec's Conseil supérieur de l'Éducation. Strongly committed to the future of her community,

Marcelline Picard-Kanapé was the first young woman to be elected as a band councillor and then became the first woman elected as an Innu chief, a position she held for two terms.

Clearly aware of the role and contribution of women in both traditional society and modern society, she very early on assumed the enormous mission of opening doors and new opportunities for young Aboriginal women, thus enabling them to look to the future with optimism and confidence.

She firmly believes in the harmonious coexistence of societies that proudly express their differences. Marcelline Picard-Kanapé is currently principal of Uashkaikan secondary school.



5.2 Moving Away from Eurocentric Perspectives: Education As a Collective Process

KAHENRAKWAS DONNA GOODLEAF, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
KANIEN'KEHÁ:KA ONKWAWEN:NA RAOTITIOHKWA CULTURAL CENTER, KAHNAWAKE

Before I begin, it is proper protocol for me, as a Kanien'kahá:ka woman, to first explain who I am. My name is Donna Kahenrakwas Goodleaf. I am a citizen of the Kanien'kahá:ka Mohawk Nation and a member of the Bear clan.

In this paper, I will look at the educational role that Indigenous community-based institutions, such as cultural centres, play in the restoration, revitalization, and promotion of Indigenous languages, cultural world views, and traditions of peoples such as the Kanien'kehá:ka, Onkwawén:na, and the Otajokor.

Erasing Identities in a Eurocentric Educational System

My personal memories have had a profound impact on my view of Western education as a form of structural and cognitive imperialism. My educational experiences from elementary school to university illustrate the depth of indoctrination and abuse aimed at erasing my existence, my culture, and my identity as a Kanien'kehá:ka woman. I remember the French teacher hitting my hands with the ruler in elementary school, whenever I did not respond to his question in correct French. In high school, I learned in history classes that Iroquois were ignorant savages. There were no Indigenous teachers, no curriculum that reflected and validated the Indigenous world views, cultural traditions, voices, or histories of my people. The educational system was imbued with Eurocentrism.

As Mohawk scholar and community activist Marlene Brant Castalano recalls, "In school when I learned about the savage Iroquois and how they slaughtered the brave pioneers and priests, I made no connection between the textbooks and the Mohawks of which I was one. But at university, people began to ask questions about my "Indian-ness," and I realized that I had been socialized into an identity that totally ignored my heritage in history. This was the beginning of my conscious effort to sort out what it meant to be an Indian in modern society."

As Mi'gmaq scholar Marie Battiste and Chickasaw scholar James Youngblood Henderson observe (Battiste and Henderson 2000), "For most indigenous students, in Eurocentric education, realizing their invisibility is like looking into a still lake and not seeing the reflections. They become alien in their own eyes, unable to recognize themselves in the reflections and shadows of the world."

Discouraged, frustrated, or tired of feeling invisible, many Aboriginal students drop out of the system. For those of us that do make it through the university doors as students and faculty, we find ourselves battling within and against an educational system that perpetuates a Eurocentric curriculum as the supreme canon of thought. When I was a graduate student enrolled in a history course on Indian and White relations, the instructor began his discussion by introducing the Bering Strait theory, to explain the arrival of Native Americans to North America. As the only Indigenous woman in the course, I raised my hand and told him that I disagreed with his theoretical perspective because it did not take

into consideration the Indigenous world view including our creation stories or origin histories. The instructor's response was that the Bering Strait theory was a scientific theory that was widely accepted by scientists. Obviously, he was referring to American male scientists in the fields of archaeology and anthropology. He carried on lecturing, invalidating and dismissing the cultural world view I spoke from. Such a presentation of history from a Eurocentric perspective not only shows history in an abstract form, detached from reality, but obscures and suppresses the voices, stories, and experiences of Indigenous people.

Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitiohkwa Center

Indigenous community-based cultural centres play an important role in reinstating these suppressed voices, stories, and experiences. Language, being inseparable from culture, is a key element in this effort. In 1977, the Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawen:na Raotitiohkwa Center was created by a group of concerned and committed community members, dedicated to securing the vitality of our language and culture. The mission of Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawen:na Raotitiohkwa Center, as a catalyst for community change, is to lead and support all Kahnawake Hrono in practicing, maintaining, respecting, renewing, and enhancing Kanien'kehá:ka language, beliefs, values, customs, and traditions by means of cultural and educational activities which will ensure the continued existence of Kanien'kehá:ka people. The Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitiohkwa Center's mandate is to make a number of language and cultural programs and activities available to the entire community.

Language Immersion

An example of our language initiatives is an adult immersion program called Kanien'kehá:ka Ratiwennahni:rats, which is in its third year. The purpose of this nine-month course is to increase the oral proficiency of fifteen students in the Kanien'kehá:ka language. Apart from building language fluency and increasing the resource pool of Kanien'kehá:ka speakers, the program is meant to prepare participants for the labour market and increase their employability. Several graduates of this program successfully pursue careers as Kanien'kehá:ka teachers in our schools. We also offer day and evening classes to community members. In the summer, we organize a one-week full immersion camp for children, ages six to twelve, and their parents, as well as Kanien'kehá:ka language classes for all the employees within the nine organizations in our community.

Multimedia Programs

Using our local cable television communication system, we have been able to develop multimedia programs that are aired on our cable network, to which 90% of our community members have access. Young, creative, and talented youth from the community have participated in developing excellent programs in Kanien'kehá:ka . We are also in the process of developing a puppet show. Funded by our community's "Future" initiative, we have produced a series of video segments about the relationship between a grandmother and her grandson. The contents of this full immersion language program reflect our cultural world view—they are based on the traditional calendar of the Kanien'kehá:ka people. When the first segment was broadcast, we received an overwhelmingly positive response from many community members, including pre-school children. In short, our language

programs reach out to all different age groups, to both children and adult beginners interested in learning the language.

Cultural workshops

We have also been able to deliver cultural workshops to the community, for which we brought in *Hotinoshoni* speakers who addressed, both from a historical and from a contemporary perspective, social, political, and cultural issues that have an impact on our communities today.

Another initiative concerns a nine-week course for girls, ages six to twelve, to teach them our traditional *Hotinoshoni* songs. We used computer graphics animation to promote this course, which was much appreciated by the parents as well. Another educational technique that we are exploring is the Rosetta Stone language software technology.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that education has to be a collective process, involving our elders, our young people, our artists, our language speakers, and our educators. Bringing everyone together enables us to come up with the most innovative and creative ways to develop educational programs that are grounded in our cultural world view and in our language. In my opinion, this is the most powerful legacy that we can transmit to our children.

Reference

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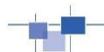
Biography

KAHENRAK WAS DONNA GOODLEAF, Ed.D., is currently the Executive Director of Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitiohkwa (cultural centre), Kahnawake (Québec).

Dr. Goodleaf has a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in Native Studies from Trent University, a Masters' Degree in Multicultural Education (M.Ed.) and a doctorate (Ed.D.) in Multicultural Education from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

She is the author of a book entitled *Entering the Warzone: A Mohawk Perspective on Resisting Invasions*. Prior to assuming the position of the new Executive Director of the Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitiohkwa, Dr. Goodleaf worked with the Aboriginal Healing Foundation for a national educational project research on the history, role and impacts of Boarding Schools —High School level—on Aboriginal communities.

She also served as former Associate Director for the First Nations and Inuit Teacher Training Program at McGill University, and as a faculty instructor, and taught at various colleges and Universities in Canada and the United States.



5.3 Postsecondary Education for Aboriginal Peoples

MANON TREMBLAY, COORDINATOR

NATIVE SUPPORT SERVICES CENTRE FOR NATIVE EDUCATION, CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

I want to thank Institut National de Recherche Scientifique, Quebec Native Women and the DIALOG network for having invited me, and I want to thank you for being here. My presentation is a tribute to Aboriginal women, and here's why: at Concordia University, where I've been working for the past ten years, the ratio of Aboriginal students is as follows: 80% of the student population is women, and we have been seeing this for the last ten years. The higher proportion of women at the postsecondary level is also found across Canada.

I've been invited to discuss what's been happening at the postsecondary level. Whether or not to pursue one's education at the university or college level is one of the most important decisions we'll have to make in our lives. When the educational institution is in a large urban centre, a person may find this an exciting time that also arouses a great many expectations and a lot of emotion. Especially for younger people, this is often their first experience of being independent. But for an Aboriginal student who decides to go to university, it can also represent a time of considerable uncertainty and self-doubt and even great frustration. Aboriginal students from remote communities who come to live in an urban centre for the first time may feel overwhelmed by this new experience. We can still feel isolated in a big city; even though major centres like Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver and Winnipeg have large Aboriginal populations. The fact that we don't all live in the same neighbourhood gives us the impression of being alone in Montreal, of being the only Aboriginal person and of not having anyone to confide in, especially when we aren't familiar with the whole structure and all the Aboriginal organizations that exist in these urban centres. We also know that living in an urban setting, for someone who comes from a small Aboriginal community, can trigger culture shock. But for an Aboriginal student, the real culture shock happens when he or she starts university: learning to live in the city is one thing, and learning to cope in a university is another. University education can, by itself, represent a major culture shock.

Aboriginal Students at the Postsecondary Level: Warriors of the New Generation?

In 1967, during Canada's centennial celebrations, Chief Dan George, now deceased, gave a speech about the condition of Aboriginal peoples over the past one hundred years, since Confederation: the erosion of our cultures and languages, the oppression experienced at the hands of governmental and religious authorities, etc. But his was also a message of hope: despite everything we had gone through, despite our suffering, our cultures could begin to take flight once again. He said that it would be young people who would help us, who would go to seek out the tools and skills of the "Whites" through a university education, and then invest these skills in their Aboriginal communities. He said that those who went off to pursue postsecondary education would become the new warriors, the warriors of the new generation.

Difficult Access to Education for Single Mothers

But what Chief Dan George didn't mention is how difficult it is to go to get this education; and it is still difficult for our young—and not so young—people. Although we can go to university as early as age 19 in Quebec, the average age of the Aboriginal female student—since we're talking about a student population of 80% women—is 33 years old. So we're talking about women who already have families, and the vast majority of these students are single mothers. They then have to reconcile family responsibilities with their university studies. They also have to deal with their children's culture shock, and not just their own.

Can One Study and Keep One's Aboriginal Identity?

The time when university access would have been blocked to us because of our race or religion is over. Universities are open to everyone, although financial problems may arise. What is difficult for an Aboriginal person who starts university is navigating through a program of study without losing his or her sense of identity or culture. Universities are not structured to help us better understand our cultures; they have a very colonialist curriculum when it comes to Aboriginal peoples. Some courses on Aboriginal issues are of course offered in all universities but these courses are very often designed and taught by non-Aboriginal people. That doesn't work. We don't need to have non-Aboriginal anthropologists' and sociologists' perspectives on our cultures; what we need to know is how we view ourselves.

Aboriginal Teaching Staff

I am a member of a Concordia University committee that for the last three years has been responsible for creating a bachelor's degree program in Aboriginal studies. Before we can offer this bachelor's program, we have to go through several levels of decision-making authority for the program to be approved. We've successfully negotiated the first level and are now at the second. We're running into problems here because the professors don't understand the legitimacy of hiring Aboriginal people to teach the courses in this program, which is what we very strongly want to see. The colonialist attitude of universities still exists today, in 2005.

Aboriginal students also have to deal with the lack of understanding and at times misplaced attitudes of other students, professors or lecturers, who don't understand the nature of our past, present and future reality. They also have to deal with course content or discussions where what is reported is sometimes biased or outdated, and where our contributions are sometimes trivialized or considered unimportant by the professor and other students.

Concordia University's Native Support Services

So how can Aboriginal students survive in such an environment? How can they get a degree with the sense of having accomplished something? And with the certainty of not having compromised themselves or having compromised our identity or cultures? There are several ways to do this. At Concordia University's Native Support Services at the Centre for Native Education, we encourage our students to try some of the following tactics. First, never lose sight of the goals and objectives that brought you to university.

Most of our students say that they hope to learn and then go back to their communities and help people. The vast majority of our women students are studying in the human relations program in order to become counsellors, psychotherapists, etc. Even if we can't always make the connection between the course content and our culture, our community and what we want to do in the future, we have to remember that we will find this connection.

Some Important Conditions for Success at University

We also have to make sure that we aren't advancing alone on our journey. There are 150 Aboriginal students at Concordia University. Keeping in contact with other students is very important. It's also crucial to maintain close ties with one's community of origin and to reassure students, because, due to factors related to culture and identity, the community of origin doesn't always understand why we are taking this journey. Often, women who have pursued postsecondary education and obtained a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree are poorly received by the community of origin. Some people think that we become "White" after going to university. So we have to reassure the community of origin and our families about the goals and objectives that we are pursuing.

To be sure not to lose contact with your culture, you can do all your schoolwork on Aboriginal issues, as I did. This way we can promote the value of our culture at the university, even if it is rarely discussed in the courses. It's surprising to see the professors' interest in our work and what we're expressing in this work.

Sometimes, Aboriginal students will encounter injustices or discriminatory remarks. I in fact received a complaint against a history professor who had made inappropriate remarks about the Mohawks employed in building the Victoria Bridge. If we encounter disagreeable remarks, we should complain. Our centre is actually there for that. And involving oneself alone in such a dispute may be detrimental to students who already have a lot of other things to think about. Universities have structures to deal with this sort of thing.

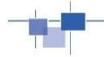
Another way of keeping in contact with your culture is to participate in class discussions as much as possible. But we should do this in an informed way. If what you say in class is very emotional, on the defensive and aggressive, you won't be respected. But if you speak in a calm and well-informed manner, everyone will be interested. Students also need to keep involved, in a student association, for example. Student associations aren't necessarily caught up in political projects. They are very often simply places for students to meet.

Universities are places of openness to the world, where a hundred or more cultures are represented. For example, at Concordia University, there are 4,000 students from foreign countries. We should take advantage of this to learn about other cultures. And you might be surprised to see how much a number of other cultures have in common with us.

You need a lot of courage to go to university. You also have to be able to start your university studies under the best possible conditions. For example, I've seen students begin their courses with active dependencies on drugs, alcohol or other substances. When we have a very good idea of what we want to do in life, when we have clear goals and are confident of our identity and culture, the university can only be of help to us.

Biography

MANON TREMBLAY is a Plains Cree, from the maskêko-sâkahikanihk (Muskeg Lake) community, in Saskatchewan. She is the Coordinator of the Centre for Native Education at Concordia University, a position she has held for the past ten years. She is currently completing her master's degree in linguistics on the Cree language.



5.4 Services and Programs for First Nations at UQAT

JANET MARK, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSOCIATE AND LIAISON OFFICER
FOR FIRST NATIONS, UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC EN ABITIBI-TÉMISCAMINGUE

Hello. I'd like to thank the organizers for this invitation: it's an honour for me to be here and to be seated at the same table as my colleagues. I was asked to talk to you about identity, culture and education. Before I came to Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT)—the university that I work for—I had always worked in an Aboriginal community or for an Aboriginal organization in an urban area. When I found myself in a milieu such as the university, first as a student starting in 2001 and then as an employee, I always felt the need to promote our culture, history, beliefs and values, and to highlight our identity and pride. I also wanted to offer more services and programs for First Nations. In a short amount of time, we've taken concrete steps at UQAT to promote our culture and identity. We've developed approaches to ensure that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people meet together. We're only beginning, and there's a lot of work still to be done, including fostering awareness on the part of non-Aboriginal people, whether they are professionals, professors, management or support staff.

The Fostering of Awareness by Aboriginal People

I'm going to present the services offered to students, which are directly related to their identity and culture. At UQAT, we want to make non-Aboriginal people more aware of our culture, and we find that there are people sensitive to the cause who show openness and interest. But I sincerely believe that if we want our identity and culture to be recognized in such a milieu, this has to be done by Aboriginal people. Our focus is always to ensure that the decisions made include the concerns of First Nations and the Inuit. All the programs and services that we want to offer should be designed by First Nations themselves, which isn't always easy because we have to deal with bureaucracy, the unions and existing norms and we always have to find a way to achieve our goal. We also have to deal with the dominant society, which has a different organizational culture from ours.

In our work environment and in the city where we live, there are still prejudices, stereotypes, racist remarks, clichés, discrimination and ethnocentrism. All these obstacles have negative effects on our cultural identity. The stereotypes and negative image that non-Aboriginal people have of us are superimposed on the cultural identity that we acquired when we were children, and this often leads to identity crises and low self-esteem.

To ensure the academic success of our Aboriginal students, many things have to be done and many aspects have to be considered. First, we have to get non-Aboriginal professors to know and understand the past history of First Nations, and the many and complex issues and problems—which are all interrelated—and make them aware of the various obstacles and barriers that can hamper communication, intervention and understanding of the other.

We also have to get them to reflect on themselves, on their way of being and acting. We need a lot of humility to do all this, because we have to get people to see through the eyes of the other person and to go outside their frame of reference. They have to be willing to

change their approach, to be tolerant of cultural diversity and to positively support Aboriginal identity.

Cultural Identity: a Reflection of the Surrounding Society

The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples talks about identity. It states that Aboriginal people's identity blossoms when other people send them a positive image that corresponds with the way they see themselves, which affords them recognition and strengthens their self-esteem. As Aboriginal people participate more and more in group activities outside their immediate surroundings and interact with members of the overall society, the image that people reflect back to them significantly affects their identity. We must not forget that Aboriginal people often encounter problems in the area of their cultural identity. Another interesting aspect mentioned in the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples is that culture includes all the concrete and abstract things that people learn and share in contact with their environment. It includes their vision of the world and of a particular community: its beliefs, values, customs and ways of looking at life; and these elements may be reflected in the material objects of this community. It is also the way that the community as a whole perceives the world on an everyday level, with all that this implies in terms of meanings, symbols and behavioural norms, as well as the common understanding of accepted behaviours in this world. Aboriginal cultural identity is not made up of a single element, but rather of a complex series of components that determine how a person sees himself or herself as an Aboriginal person. Cultural identity is also a feeling of being wanted, of being comfortable with oneself and of belonging to something greater than oneself.

Aboriginal People's Integration in the University

Eight Aboriginal people currently work at UQAT as professors, professionals or secretaries. The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples states that twelve specific elements are needed to ensure the success of First Nations in institutions such as universities. A welcoming atmosphere is one of these specific elements, and we're trying to create this at UQAT: words of welcome in five languages are displayed inside the university; Aboriginal people greet the students; and we promote Aboriginal cultural activities and material aspects of the culture. We also organize orientation days and weeks for new students.

Also part of these specific elements is the integration of Aboriginal content and perspectives into the courses offered in the various disciplines. This is a job that hasn't been fully accomplished yet. At UQAT, the bachelor's program in social work was completely revamped by an Aboriginal person to meet the needs of First Nations. This program is working very well. Other programs, such as certificates in administration and accounting, were adapted to meet the needs of Aboriginal students so that they could apply the theoretical aspect they had learned to their own realities and communities.

Another important element is the active recruitment of Aboriginal students. This is part of my job and I realize how different it is when an Aboriginal person is doing the recruiting: it's easier to communicate. People often ask me if I speak Cree, and right away we start communicating in Cree. I believe that the more Aboriginal people there will be in universities, the easier it will be to bring about change. Another element is to have

Aboriginal people sitting on boards of directors. At UQAT, one seat on the board is reserved for an Aboriginal person. So its elements like that that will allow us to change things by taking into account First Nations and Inuit concerns.

Designated spaces for Aboriginal students are also very important. At UQAT, we have an Aboriginal lounge. Non-Aboriginal students often ask why we have a specific space and why we don't integrate into other student lounges. I think they find it hard to understand that everyone needs to identify with a particular group. I believe that our Aboriginal lounge allows students to meet, identify with one another, find each other, feel good, and feel accepted by the group. That's part of what identity means. I also believe that we need to have more and more Aboriginal professors and professionals in universities because these people represent behavioural models for Aboriginal students, who can then identify with that other person who is also a member of a First Nation. A high level of trust and communication develops between the two.

To raise the awareness of professors, professionals and students, we've been holding monthly luncheon meetings for the past two years. These meetings are broadcast by videoconferencing to the Rouyn-Noranda and Amos campuses. We discuss various Aboriginal issues. We also organize annual colloquiums.

The fact that several Aboriginal people work at the university encourages non-Aboriginal students to do their homework on Aboriginal issues and gets them interested in doing internships in the Aboriginal milieu. I find it interesting to see these effects on non-Aboriginal students.

Education: Little Things to Promote and Highlight Our Culture

I think that we don't always have to do big things that take up a lot of time and energy; we can do a number of little things like this, which help to promote and highlight the identity and culture of the various nations in Quebec. At the primary and secondary school level, why not offer an Aboriginal language course instead of Spanish? We have to stop ignoring the history of Aboriginal peoples. The history of Aboriginal peoples should be a compulsory part of history courses at the primary, secondary and college levels. We need to bring change to university programs. For example, literature courses should present Aboriginal authors; art courses should include First Nations and Inuit art and craftwork; and courses on the environment should include ancestral knowledge about the land.

At the university, we want to offer an English-language bachelor's degree program in preschool and primary education for First Nations. But the Catholic religious teaching course isn't appropriate for Aboriginal students. So, as Aboriginal people, when we have this type of concern, we can say so and make the necessary changes.

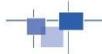
To conclude, education is one of the ways for us, as First Nations, to reassume control over our lives and regain our balance as individuals, families, communities and nations. I realize that an environment like a university is a good place to make changes happen. It's not easy and it takes perseverance, but I think that we can effect change. And if we want to promote our culture, we'll have to make changes in the courses and new programs developed. All these things that we're going to do will then enable us to preserve, enrich and strengthen our cultural identity. Thank you.

Biography

JANET MARK, a member of the Cree Nation, comes from Senneterre (Quebec). Since 2003, she has been an administrative assistant and First Nations liaison officer at Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT).

In 2004, she was acting director at the Val-d'Or campus.

She completed a bachelor's degree in preschool and elementary education at Université Laval (1988) and obtained a master's degree in psychoeducation from UQAT Rouyn-Noranda (2003). Ms. Mark previously worked as a research officer and academic advisor for Aboriginal students at UQAT. She also spent six years with the Native Friendship Centre of Val d'Or, where she held various positions, and worked for seven years with the Cree School Board as teacher, elementary school vice-principal and elementary-secondary school principal.



Sixth Part

Renewing Health Perspectives and Services

6.1 Exploring the Links Between Social Support and Health: a Research Proposal

CHANTELLE RICHMOND, DOCTORAL CANDIDATE
MCGILL UNIVERSITY

I want to thank Quebec Native Women for inviting me here today, and of course I would like to congratulate them on their 30th anniversary. My paper is drawing on my Ph.D. research at McGill University. I have already done quite a bit of statistical work and am now moving into a more qualitative investigation into connections between Native women's understanding of social support and their health.

Developments in Health Theory: Health As a Multidimensional Concept

In the past few decades, health theory and measurement have undergone a significant transition. While concepts of health were once understood primarily in terms of biological and organ functioning, researchers today are seeking to understand concepts of health on a multitude of personal and societal levels, and from a multidisciplinary perspective. This explains why a geographer such as myself is doing health research.

There are a number of reasons for this transition in health theory. It is now well established that health is a multidimensional concept. It is context-dependent and possibly culturally defined. Social interaction, mental well-being, and emotional and psychological stability are new dimensions that have been added to disease-driven understandings of health and have widened the context within which health is studied. Particularly important to our understanding of what makes people healthy are the connections between social support and health.

The Influence of Social Support

Social support refers to the resources that one can obtain through social relationships. It operates on the levels of both the individual and the society, and the evidence suggests that intimacy and friendships, social participation and strong supportive networks improve health at home, at work, and in the community. Social support can work both ways, however. It can promote your health, as when you have an exercise partner or someone you practice your traditional language with, or if you belong to a women's sharing circle. On the other hand, social support can also promote health damaging behaviours: for instance, if you have a group of friends that condone risky behaviours, such as chronic gambling, alcohol consumption, or illicit drug use.

However, what we do not understand very well are the physiological means through which social exclusion can cause people to be unwell. In practice, those who are socially excluded are more likely to suffer accelerated ageing and other physical problems, such as cardiovascular disease. What we need is research to help us understand the connections between social support and health, and the ways in which individuals' health may be mediated by their experiences of social exclusion as well as inclusion.

Existing Studies on Social Support and Health

There are a number of studies linking social support and health, but these concern mainly Western populations, not Aboriginal peoples in Canada. For instance, in a Canadian context, Nancy Ross, my thesis supervisor at McGill, found better health among Canadian individuals who report strong ties to their community, compared to those without such links. Some of the best evidence to substantiate the link between social connections and health comes from a large study of residents in California during the 1960s and 1970s. Those who reported ties to the community were less often ill and lived longer, compared with people without such links. This evidence remained valid even after controlling for factors such as socioeconomic status, health behaviours, and the use of health care services.

Social Support and Aboriginal Health: an Urgent Need to Study the Links

As I mentioned, no such research has been done to study these connections within the Aboriginal community. My thesis is an attempt to come up with these data. So why might it be important to study the links between social support and Aboriginal health? Within the Aboriginal population, the overall leading causes of death are injury and poisoning, disease of the circulatory system, cancer, and respiratory disease. If we consider mortality by age, however, causes become more specific. For those aged 45 and older, circulatory disease is the most common cause of death, mirroring trends found within the Canadian population in its entirety. Among those between the ages of 1 and 44, however, the most common cause of death is injury and poisoning, which includes accidents, violence, and self-injury. In fact, the most direct indicator of acute social problems in Aboriginal Canada are the astounding rates of suicide, particularly among the young, which constitute an even greater reason for concern as the Aboriginal population is very young and growing rapidly.

In 1996, 39% of the Aboriginal population reported family violence as a social problem. In 1999, the suicide rate among First Nations was 27.9 deaths per 100,000 compared to 13.2 for the Canadian population. With respect to suicide, all First Nations groups, up to age 65, are at increased risk, while First Nation males are at a higher risk than females. The greatest disparity with the Canadian rates concerns Aboriginal females aged 15 to 29, for whom the rates of suicide are five to seven times those of the equivalent Canadian population segment. So there is quite a bit of urgency to explore the ways in which social relationships and social support can mediate health outcomes in an Aboriginal context, particularly since health is a more socialized concept within Aboriginal communities. From an Indigenous perspective, health is not viewed as an attribute of the physical body separate or distinct from other aspects of a person. Rather, health is a larger, holistic concept that embodies the connections among human, spiritual, and environmental systems. Health is equally dependent on the mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical aspects of a person. These four dimensions are conceptualized in the Medicine Wheel, a First Nations model of health. The fundamental principle of this perspective is that Aboriginal health centres on achieving and maintaining a state of balance that simultaneously incorporates these four main dimensions. Aboriginal concepts of health situate the individual at the centre of a holistic framework that includes the family, community, nature, and the Creator. Individuals' experiences of their health and healing are therefore shaped not only by their individual characteristics, but also by the social

support systems available to them, and the material and emotional resources implicit in social relationships.

The following narrative, which Tom Iron gave to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, serves to illustrate my research approach: “The wellness of our people, including their social, economic and spiritual well-being, crosses the boundaries of the separate terms of reference of the Royal Commission. Wellness is a community issue, a national issue, a women’s issue. It touches youth concerns, family considerations, even self-government and historical concerns. I firmly believe that no other issue so fundamentally relates to the survival of our people as that of our health.”

Pursuing New Ways of Understanding Health in Aboriginal Communities

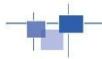
Building upon a growing body of Indigenous research, I plan to analyze the perceptions of Aboriginal women in order to get insights into sources of social support in their communities. This will involve interpreting the statistical analyses I already have by drawing on the experiences and interpretations of Aboriginal women. My two objectives are, firstly, to explain the sources of social support among a national sample of Aboriginal women, and, secondly, to understand the meaning of social support in the production of good health.

Because the disparities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal health are so vast, much of the research in my field has tended to focus on illuminating the differences between these two populations, instead of exploring the diversity that exists within the Aboriginal population. What we need is research that looks within the population to understand how, for instance, place shapes health. In health research, we need to conceive of Aboriginal peoples as distinct nations and collectives of individuals spread out across a vast geographic space.

What my research seeks to do is to pursue new ways of understanding health so that it focuses less on sickness, death, poverty, and all of the other awful categories with which Aboriginal people tend to be associated, and more on positive outcomes, such as the strength and resilience of families in communities in producing good health. Finally, I would like to acknowledge that this research is being funded by a graduate scholarship from the University of Toronto and the McMaster Indigenous Health Research Development program.

Biography

CHANTELLE RICHMOND is an Ojibway of Pic River First Nation, Ontario. She completed her B.A. and M.A. in the School of Geography and Geology, McMaster University, and is currently in Year II of her Ph.D. in the Department of Geography at McGill University. From a population health perspective, Chantelle's doctoral thesis broadly explores the social determinants of Aboriginal health. More specifically, her thesis will explore the connection between social support and Aboriginal health. The contributions of Chantelle's thesis form a significant point of departure from previous research in the area of Aboriginal health, as it focuses on positive outcomes, and the strengths and resilience of families and communities in producing these outcomes. Once she completes her Ph.D., she looks forward to a faculty position within a Canadian institution where she may continue such research and to teaching and training students in Aboriginal health.



6.2 Researching Mental Health Problems in Two Aboriginal Urban Settings

KAHÀ:WI JACOBS, DOCTORAL CANDIDATE
MCGILL UNIVERSITY

As a doctoral candidate in the Department of Psychiatry at McGill University and a member of the National Network for Aboriginal Mental Health Research (NNAMHR), I am involved in mental health research in Aboriginal urban communities. Today I will be presenting results of research that I have undertaken with Dr. Kathryn Gill, in collaboration with the Native Friendship Centre of Montreal (NFCM), and I will explain how this work has evolved into the current project that is being carried out in collaboration with the Native Women’s Shelter of Montreal (NWSM).

First of all, I would like to acknowledge Mrs. Ida LaBillois-Montour, who was the Executive Director of the NFCM when we started the first project, and Jean Stevenson and Nakuset, the previous and current Executive Directors of the Native Women’s Shelter of Montreal. These women were key in developing and directing the research that we have been conducting in Montreal. I also want to mention that our research team tries to encourage Aboriginal students to enter the field of mental health research—every summer, our team offers a six-to-eight-week program that allows Aboriginal students with a CEGEP or Bachelor’s background to gain experience working in a research team. This is also how I became involved in this work.

Problems Known, but not Researched

I would like to start with an example of the background literature that sparked our interest in this research. In 1994, La Prairie wrote, “Urban Natives are over-involved with the criminal justice system, and the lives of inner city Aboriginals are characterized by despondency and hopelessness and hardcore alcohol problems. (La Prairie 1994)” Another quote from 1994 reads, “The most visible problems related to mental health in Aboriginals are alcoholism, drug abuse and family dysfunction, and these problems rarely occur in isolation” (Petawabano *et al.* 1994). What is important to note here is that in 1994, while these problems were well known, they had not been extensively researched. This is why we decided to undertake a mental health project.

Project at the Native Friendship Centre

The objective of our project at the Friendship Centre was to explore the health and mental health of Aboriginal people in Montreal. Participants in our study included status and non-status, Native, Inuit, and Métis people residing in Montreal and the surrounding areas. In total, we interviewed 345 people in different research sites: Native-run businesses and organizations, educational institutions, drop-in centres, and Montreal streets. The purpose was to interview people from as many socioeconomic strata as possible. We conducted semi-structured interviews using the Addiction Severity Index (ASI) in order to collect information on medical and psychiatric history, family social history, drug and alcohol use, employment, and legal problems.

I feel it is important to point out that questions regarding psychological history were asked in such a way as to take into account people's understandings of mental health issues. For instance, instead of asking, "Have you been feeling depressed in the past 30 days?" we would ask, "Have you been feeling blue? Have you been feeling down? Have you been having trouble dealing with daily activities, dealing with people?" In addition, instead of asking, "Have you experienced any anxiety in the past month?," we would ask, "Have you had a significant period of time where you were really worried about things, to the point where you could not stop thinking about them and could not relax or sleep?"

Characteristics and Results

The characteristics of the general sample were as follows. The mean age of our respondents was 32 years. The majority of respondents were unemployed, Inuit, and female, and they were living with their spouses and children. The mean length of residence in Montreal was almost 10 years, which contradicts the assumption that Aboriginal people are fairly new to the city. A third of the sample self-reported a current substance abuse problem.

As we wanted to distinguish the characteristics of substance abusers from non-abusers, we stratified the sample by these two groups. What we found was that while levels of psychological distress were high overall, substance abusers experienced significantly more psychological distress than non-abusers. In particular, substance abusers were more likely to have serious thoughts of committing suicide, and to have attempted suicide. We also noted higher levels of physical and sexual abuse among substance abusers. These last results made us curious about the characteristics of those who had been abused.

In order to study physical and sexual abuse, we divided our respondents into three groups: those who had never been abused (NA), those who had been physically abused (PA), and those who had been both physically and sexually abused or exclusively sexually abused (DSA). We could not include a separate group of sexually abused respondents because we did not have a sufficient number to constitute a separate group. We broke these groups down by gender and found that females were more likely than males to have been both physically and sexually abused.

Histories of Physical and Sexual Abuse Linked to Current Problems

As to drug and alcohol use, those in the PA and DSA groups were more likely to have a current substance abuse problem. They were more likely to report problems with drug and alcohol use in the past 30 days, and spent significantly more money on drugs and alcohol in the past 30 days.

Looking at psychological problems, we found, again, high rates of psychological stress overall, but in particular we noted a linear increase in rates of psychological distress as you go across the three groups (NA, PA, DSA), with those in the DSA group consistently having the highest levels of psychological distress.

Adding gender into the mix, we found that females were more likely to suffer from psychological distress. Regarding family and social relationships, we found that those who had been abused were less likely to report having a close relationship with their mothers and were more likely to report having had serious problems getting along with them.

Whereas the rates of family histories of drug or alcohol problems are high right across the board, when it comes to family histories of psychological problems, those in the DSA group, again, showed the highest levels. This may include trouble controlling violent behaviour, depression, or emotional difficulties.

To summarize this project, those with a history of physical or sexual abuse were more likely to report having a current substance abuse problem and being psychologically distressed. Physically and sexually abused females were more likely than males to suffer from psychological distress. Physically and sexually abused respondents were more likely to have had relationship problems with their families and to report a history of psychological problems.

Project at the Native Women's Shelter

According to the literature, such issues cross geographic, cultural, and social boundaries. One common vein throughout all the research, however, is that women, children, teenagers, and the elderly continue to be the most prominent victims of family violence. In a recent Statistics Canada report, moreover, it was indicated that Aboriginal women are more likely to be the victims of spousal abuse in their lifetimes than non-Aboriginal women. This is what the project with the Native Women's Shelter was in part developed to investigate. We want to explore whether Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women have similar histories of physical and sexual abuse, psychological problems, and substance abuse. In this project we are collecting retrospective accounts of the nature and context of abuse, including the types, their timing and frequency, and the individual's relationship with the perpetrator, and are exploring whether histories of childhood abuse, neglect, and a family history of psychological problems correlate with current psychological distress and substance abuse. To collect information, we interview women who use emergency shelters and social services in the city. So our respondents belong to a help-seeking population.

Our instruments include, again, the Addiction Severity Index (ASI), and for this project we also use the Child Abuse and Trauma Scale (CATS), and the Childhood Experience of Care and Abuse (CECA) interview. The CATS is a self-report, in which people rate thirty-eight items on a scale from 0 to 5 on the subject of violence and neglect experienced at home as a child or teenager. The CECA is a retrospective, semi-structured interview that we tape-record. Using lead questions with additional probe questions, women tell their stories in their own words. This interview explores different types of adverse childhood experiences from ages 0 to 17.

Preliminary Results

We have run preliminary analyses on the data that we have collected so far, broken down by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal respondents. The findings echo the Statistics Canada report, in that Aboriginal women are more likely to have been physically and sexually abused. They are also more likely to have attempted suicide. Aboriginal women were more likely to have witnessed the physical mistreatment of a family member (90% versus 63%), more likely to have witnessed sexual mistreatment of a family member, more likely to have had a sexual experience with an adult before the age of 14, and more likely to have had a traumatic sexual experience as a child or a teenager.

These health and mental health problems involve many social, psychological, and demographic factors. We will continue investigations into these complex and multilayered problems. Getting more Aboriginal students involved in mental health research and in promoting cultural understandings of mental health would be a great asset.

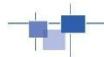
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Biography

KAHÁ:WI JACOBS is a Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) from Kahnawake (Québec). She has an ongoing interest in the well-being of First Nations peoples and has been actively engaged in conducting research since 1996 as a member of the Aboriginal Mental Health Research Team at McGill University. She is affiliated with the Addictions Unit, McGill University Health Centre, and was a fellow of the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada (2001-2004). In 2003, she was awarded the Certificate of Recognition for Contribution to Innovation and Excellence in Aboriginal Health Research from The Canadian Institutes of Health Research —Institute of Aboriginal Peoples' Health (CIHR-IAPH). She completed her Master's Degree in Psychiatry and is currently pursuing doctoral studies in Transcultural Psychiatry at McGill University.



6.3 The National Aboriginal Health Organization: Towards an Indigenization of Health Research

ROBERTA STOUT, ANALYST
NATIONAL ABORIGINAL HEALTH ORGANIZATION

In my presentation, I will give an overview of the National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO) and look at some NAHO activities related to Aboriginal women, health, and health research. In conclusion, I will present a few alternative models as ways of knowing and conducting research that may be more appropriate and lead to better services for Aboriginal women and our communities.

NAHO: the National Aboriginal Health Organization

The National Aboriginal Health Organization is an Aboriginal-designed and controlled body that aims to influence and advance the health and well-being of Aboriginal peoples by carrying out knowledge-based strategies. Essentially, NAHO is a knowledge sharing and knowledge translation organization. There are five different objectives in NAHO's work: improve and promote the health of Aboriginal peoples through knowledge-based activities; draw attention to health issues pertaining to Aboriginal peoples by means that include communications and public awareness activities; facilitate and promote research and develop research partnerships; foster the recruitment and retention, training and employment of Aboriginal peoples in health careers; affirm Aboriginal traditional healing practices and medicines and to ensure that such practices receive recognition and are appreciated.

NAHO has three centres of health excellence: the Métis Centre, the First Nations Centre, and the Ajunnginiq Centre, which is for the Inuit. Supportive roles are played by the Information Centre on Aboriginal Health (ICAH), the Communications Unit (CU), the Policy Research Unit (PRU), and Management Support Services (MSS).

NAHO Documentation and Networks

Focussing on Aboriginal women and health, I would like to mention a few foundational documents that have been developed at NAHO or are being developed presently. *Métis Medicine Women and Traditional Knowledge* is a discussion paper currently being developed. We also publish a Women's Rights and Discrimination discussion paper series on Aboriginal health and legal issues. We have also developed a discussion paper on midwifery. We produce a journal on Aboriginal health, of which a future issue will focus on Aboriginal women and health. In the spring edition of *NAHO Network News*, the focus will be on the same theme. We are exploring models for quality maternity care in First Nations and Inuit communities—a preliminary needs assessment and participatory action research have been completed. We have also deployed activities related to sexual and reproductive health and family planning. Our first round table on Aboriginal women's health was held in December 2004, and a follow-up round table will be organized on March 8, 9, and 10 in Ottawa, with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis women representatives.

We are active in a series of partnerships and networks, both national and international, which include the Aboriginal Women's Health and Healing Research Group, the Aboriginal

Midwifery Network, the International Indigenous Nurses Network, the Continental Network of Indigenous Women, and the International Indigenous Women's Network on Biodiversity.

Specific Problems

Elaborating on our objective to facilitate and promote research and develop research partnerships, I want to point out a few specific problems. We know that Aboriginal women suffer from a double marginalization, as Aboriginal people and as women. We also know that Aboriginal peoples cope with an appalling health status and inequalities, and that these are felt at times more acutely by Aboriginal women, who have seldom benefited from sustained research attention. Moreover, the researchers who are coming into our communities are generally and historically non-Aboriginal people from the outside.

Some Statistics

Let me start by giving you some statistics from *The Aboriginal Women's Health Research Synthesis Report* (Dion-Stout 2001). The breakdown of Aboriginal women in Canada is as follows: First Nations, 66%; Métis, 25%; Inuit, 5%; and Other, 3%. From the previous papers, we have already heard about the high suicide rate among Aboriginal women. Moreover, Aboriginal women aged between 25 and 44 have a mortality rate due to violence that is five times higher than for non-Aboriginal women. Aboriginal women are over-represented in Canadian homicide statistics. Aboriginal women are more likely to live in a situation of domestic violence and substance abuse. Aboriginal women constitute 19% of all incarcerated Canadian women, despite representing only 2% of the national population.

Levels of income and education are both indicators of health status. In some communities, the dropout rates for our Aboriginal students are as high as 70%. Aboriginal women, however, attain higher educational levels than their male counterparts, although they continue to fare far less well than Canadian women. This means that Aboriginal women continue to remain in low-paying jobs, part-time jobs, and clerical, service, and administrative positions.

Aboriginal women are on average 10 years younger than Canadian women, but they will also on average die 10 years earlier than Canadian women. Their life span is similar to those of women in developing nations. Aboriginal women generally experience socioeconomic marginalization and poor health profiles.

A Need for Research Based on Equitable Relationships

What we found through the work of Aboriginal Women's Health Research was that the health of Aboriginal women continues to be an area that is understudied, particularly in the case of Métis and Inuit women. Moreover, research that has been done on Aboriginal women's health is poorly understood, as the experiences of Aboriginal women have historically been either misinterpreted or misrepresented, and are focussed on the negative, as opposed to on what we are doing as social agents of change.

NAHO has defined areas that can have a positive impact on research on Aboriginal women and communities. Until now, research funding has largely been acquired by only a very small number of external agencies and organizations. Moreover, Aboriginal peoples

have been treated merely as a source of data. Researchers gather and analyze information on us, generally without our consent, review, or input. This includes genetic and cultural materials and information. Researchers generally choose subjects that are in their own interest rather than what we see as priorities within our communities. In this way, non-Aboriginal people, being in control of the research, have become the experts on us and our health. Thus, historically we have had fairly poor relationships with researchers coming from outside of our communities, resulting in knowledge that is not useful for us. Rather than having a positive effect on our lives, this research has resulted in either inaction or poorly designed policies or programs. Much needs to be done in order to restore Aboriginal people's trust in researchers and research. We need to move towards different ways of knowing and doing research that take into consideration Indigenous values, principles, and beliefs. There needs to be a shift in control over research projects, as well as in information management, once the research has been done. We need to build equitable relationships between the researchers and the researched and to develop high ethical standards that are culturally appropriate.

Five Guiding Principles for Research

To achieve this, NAHO has developed a framework based on five guiding principles. The first is that research will be focussed on community priorities and needs. This means that research needs to have a direct and immediate application in improving our health. Methods will be culturally appropriate and respectful of diversity. This means that research must be grounded in values, beliefs, experiences, and approaches that are based on what we consider respectful and balanced. Research that is based on story-telling, for example, should be just as valuable as research that is qualitative and quantitative. Another principle is that the research process should be transparent and inclusive. This means that Aboriginal people should be involved in the research process from beginning to end. Research designs need to be credible and of high quality. Finally, research must be respectful of OCAP. OCAP, or Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession, is a political response to the colonial research approaches and information management that have been our experiences in the past.

Research needs to take into account a broad context of factors that lead to the ill-health of Aboriginal peoples, including issues such as colonization, culture suppression, family and community dislocation, chronic unemployment, unhealthy environments, and unsafe educational experiences. Many of us went to school experiencing a total lack of appreciation of our identities.

Recommendations

Three recommendations of overriding importance have come out of the *Aboriginal Women's Health Research Synthesis Project*. The first is to promote the indigenization of the research process, which means that we have to support Aboriginal women health researchers and Aboriginal organizations doing the research. We need collaborative research, partnerships, and the incorporation of Aboriginal women's stories, experiences, and knowledge. The second recommendation is to engage Aboriginal women in the research process. This means building upon Aboriginal women's strong leadership role that is already established in the area of health. The final recommendation is to address gaps and weaknesses in Aboriginal women's health research in order to determine which

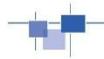
research will meaningfully and sustainably contribute to positive health outcomes for Aboriginal women and communities.

Reference

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Biography

ROBERTA STOUT is a Cree from Kehewin First Nation in Alberta. She is currently on education leave from her position as the Health Careers Policy Analyst with the National Aboriginal Health Organization. Roberta's interests are in the protection and preservation of traditional knowledge and the promotion of Indigenous languages. She is presently enrolled in the Cree Language Certificate Program at Bluequills First Nations College, in Alberta.



6.4 Violence: a Multidimensional Health Issue Requiring a Multidisciplinary Approach

SHEILA SWASSON, SUPERVISOR
HAVEN HOUSE

I appreciate having the opportunity to present at a venue such as this, to speak and share about the serious problem of violence facing so many in our Aboriginal communities. This is also an occasion to denounce violence and to engage in dialogue. It is through dialogue that we explore and find solutions, and form a support network for those out in the field.

Sources and Background

The research data on which I will draw to paint a picture of violence against Aboriginal women include material from the following sources: Health Canada, the National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence, the Aboriginal Nurses Association, and Status of Women Canada.

Family violence knows no boundaries and does not discriminate. The existence of violence against women is evident throughout history, and occurs across all ethnic, cultural, age, religious, social, and economic categories. As Aboriginal people, we are not immune to its existence, its impacts, or its effects. Family violence in Aboriginal communities and violence against Aboriginal women are reported to occur in epidemic proportions in this country. So let us take a closer look at the daunting realities and statistics of family violence in Aboriginal communities.

Statistics on Family Violence

It is estimated that between 75% and 90% of women in some northern Aboriginal communities are abused. The same study found that 40% of children in northern communities had been physically abused by a family member. A study by the Ontario Native Women's Association found that 8 out of 10 Aboriginal women in Ontario had personally experienced family violence. Of these women, 87% had experienced physical injury and 57% had been sexually abused. A national study by the Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada indicates that Aboriginal women and children under 15 years of age are most frequently physically abused.

Since 1999, Aboriginal women have reported abuse 3 times as often as non-Aboriginal women. The mortality rate of Aboriginal women due to violence is 3 times higher than that of all other Canadian women. For Aboriginal women aged 25 to 44, this rate is 5 times higher. Women are often the victims of family dysfunction, which results from alcohol or substance abuse. Hospital admission for alcohol-related accidents occurs 3 times more often for Aboriginal females than for the general Canadian population. In a report assessing violence against women, a statistical profile released by Status of Women Canada notes that, "Aboriginal women are also particularly vulnerable to violence. Spousal homicide rates of Aboriginal women were more than 8 times the rate for non-Aboriginal women." And in the past 20 years, over 500 Aboriginal women have gone missing from communities across Canada.

In a study completed by Health Canada, it is said that: “The measurable health cost of violence against women in Canada exceeds 1.5 billion dollars a year.” Although the report does not specify the direct cost of violence against Aboriginal women and the related cost to the health care system, we can only surmise that the direct cost of violence against Aboriginal women represents a large proportion of this figure.

In a presentation before the Prime Minister of Canada, the first ministers, and Aboriginal leaders at the First Ministers’ meeting on health on September 13, Terry Brown, the former president of the Native Women’s Association of Canada, brought forth major concerns and issues, including violence, pertaining to the health of Aboriginal women in Canada. Miss Brown stressed that violence against Aboriginal women, either in the form of racialized violence or partner abuse, is of growing concern. Currently, the rates of violence against Aboriginal women are the highest in Canada.

Violence As a Health Issue

As a consequence of the impact of violence on the health of Aboriginal women, some researchers consider violence as a health issue rather than a social one. In a report produced by the Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada in 2004, the impact of violence on Aboriginal women’s health is documented and is reported to include physical trauma, including brain and reproductive damage; long-term disabilities, which can include hearing loss; alcohol and drug dependency, including tobacco use and use and abuse of prescription drugs, in cases where doctors prescribe antidepressants to help Aboriginal women cope with the trauma of having experienced violence; depression; post-traumatic stress disorder; a higher risk of self-destructive behaviour such as promiscuity and slashing; and suicidal thoughts and attempts. Over a five-year span, from 1989 to 1993, Aboriginal women were more than three times as likely to commit suicide as were non-Aboriginal women. Other health related impacts of violence are mental health related problems such as confusion, anxiety, panic, fear, and stress; low self-esteem leading to weight gain; unhealthy eating; lack of activity; eating and sleeping disorders; miscarriages; low birth rate and premature births.

Possible Strategies for Intervention: Holistic, Culturally Relevant Approaches

Violence also has an influence on social issues, resulting in homelessness, poverty, displacement, and child abuse and neglect. Violence, viewed as a health issue that has serious impacts on the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual state of Aboriginal women and their children, families and communities, is a multidimensional issue that requires a multidisciplinary approach. Acknowledging violence as a health issue, more and more researchers and frontline workers are realizing that there is no quick or single solution to deal with the problem. Some ways to intervene to improve women’s health status could include a collaborative, multidisciplinary approach in the planning, development and implementation of programs and services that specifically address the health impacts of violence. Specialized training and sensitization could be made available to community health providers such as community health nurses and representatives to better equip them to identify the signs and symptoms of violence.

A public awareness campaign could serve to provide information on family violence, its impacts and effects, and where to get help. Other instruments of intervention may include health promotion days, “well women” health clinics, and women in wellness workshops. Through a network of community resources and health service providers, yet other ways to intervene could be identified and be community driven.

The majority of the literature on violence against Aboriginal women supports the creation of programs that integrate a holistic, culturally relevant approach. Instead of simply encompassing the Western medical model, such an approach includes the emotional, spiritual, mental and physical aspects of each individual in the community. It is imperative that we avoid the pan-Indian approach: the one-size-fits-all model in program development and service delivery. The Aboriginal population is diverse in its languages, culture, customs, traditions, and regions. This diversity should be reflected in program development. An approach that works well in one community may not work well in another, but this does not mean that the approach is not good. We do not have to reinvent the wheel: there are many available resources that can help in the development of programs and services that address the needs of the community.

Haven House: a Native Women’s Shelter

I was asked to share with you the approach that Haven House has implemented. This Native women’s shelter located in the Mi’gmaq community of Listuguj was established in 1991. Our mission is the promotion of the wellness of women and the family in a safe and comfortable environment. Our services incorporate the fundamentals found in the teachings of the medicine wheel. Haven House provides services to the Mi’gmaq communities of Listuguj and Gesgapegiag. Initially, Haven House provided only residential services to victims of family violence and abuse who required a safe and secure place. Over the years, however, with guidance from our clients, community resources, and the motivation and determination of the staff and the community, our services have continued to evolve and now include, along with the residential services, a 24-hour crisis line, a drop-in centre, outreach follow-up, counselling services, an emergency food bank, food baskets, a used clothing depot, legal consultation, transportation, support and advocacy, low income housing application, assistance and support, as well as information workshop sessions on family violence and abuse. We work collaboratively with numerous resources in the community, including social services, the community health directorate, and public security.

In 1992, Haven House established within the shelter the Family Violence Community Resource Centre. All services are available in English and Mi’gmaq. The services provided by Haven House are strongly based on the premise of community peace and the importance of choice and empowerment. Besides the choice of language, clients may choose between a mainstream Western approach and a traditional approach. We utilize talking circles ceremonies in our services and programs.

Concerns to Be Addressed

Within the last five years, Haven House has experienced a steady decline in the number of women seeking shelter. Does this mean that we have had an impact in reducing the occurrence of family violence in the community? It would be great if we have had such an

impact that women and children in the community are no longer victims of violence. But I believe it is rather the shelter's location that has had an effect on the number of clients residing there, because we are located in a residential area. To address this concern, we are placing more emphasis on further developing and enhancing our outreach program. Haven House continues to contend with a lack of awareness, with rationalization, with violence being blamed on alcohol abuse, with stigma, denial, and negative attitudes. We also continue to battle with the government regarding jurisdictional barriers to funding, as there is a major gap in funding between the provincial and the Native women's shelters.

Family violence affects all of us, either personally or in our families or communities. Each of us has the ability to make a difference: to speak out against violence, denounce violence, and support local shelters, family violence prevention programs, and community resources. There are no quick solutions to the problem of violence. We cannot change our history. We can only understand the impact it has on us today and use this understanding to pave the way towards a better future.

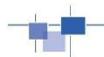
Biography

SHEILA SWASSON is a member of the Mi'gmaq First Nation and has been the Supervisor of Haven House, a native women's shelter located in her community of Listuguj (Quebec), since its inception in 1991.

Throughout her thirteen years as supervisor, she has become a strong advocate in promoting "zero tolerance" and family violence prevention/intervention in her community, as well as provincially and nationally. Currently, she is the Quebec Representative and Co-Chair of the National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence Board of Directors.

Sheila is also a member of the Network of Aboriginal Women Shelters in Quebec under the guidance and support of the Quebec Native Women Association.

She also served as the Quebec Representative on the National Steering Committee for the Aboriginal Women in Leadership Training Conference from 2001-2003.



Seventh Part

Sharing Environmental Knowledge and Territorial Issues

7.1 “I’m a Survivor”

ÉVELYNE ST-ONGE, CULTURAL COORDINATOR
INSTITUT CULTUREL ET ÉDUCATIF MONTAGNAIS

Hello. I want to thank the Mohawk Nation for receiving us and I thank you for being here. I’m going to talk to you about what we—the women of the Côte-Nord region—are doing. I’m an Innu woman from Maliotenam. I’m a survivor: I went to the Maliotenam Indian residential school for 11 years. I also married a non-Aboriginal man with whom I had two children. I lived in Montreal and for a long time worked as a nurse at the Hôtel-Dieu hospital. At one point, we went back to the Schefferville region, and I noticed a lot of racism there. In Montreal, people weren’t that racist; it was the era of “peace and love,” and Indians were seen as very exotic at that time. But it was completely the opposite in Schefferville. I lived in Schefferville and worked at the hospital. I became involved in the hospital’s board of directors, where I encountered a lot of injustices and racist remarks about the nurses, which I often denounced. Finally, I left my job at the hospital and went to work in the education field, where I was an information officer and worked with Innu parents. We also had to fight injustices in this area. For example, very official announcements on the public address system encouraged little Innu children to get products to combat flea infestations. It was like that. I’ve always reacted to situations of that kind.

A Sudden Identity Crisis

I stayed quite a long time in Schefferville. At one point I was struck by an identity crisis. I asked myself: “Am I an Indian? Am I a Quebecker? Who am I?” I was completely lost. I finally went back to my community. When I got to my community, the Innus said to me: “You’re not an Indian, you betrayed us: what are you doing here? You’re no longer one of us.” The *Indian Act* said that when we married non-Aboriginal men, we weren’t Indians any more. That’s what it was like. The Innus firmly believed that I was no longer an Indian. Québécoise who had married Innus were considered Innu; I was jealous of them at that time and reacted quite strongly to this. But when Innus told me I was no longer an Indian, that’s what made me feel like reconnecting with my culture. I still knew how to speak Innu, but I knew nothing about Innu ways and techniques, about Innu know-how. I had to learn everything again. When there were meetings concerning women, in the Innu language and culture, I always went. That’s how I learned the culture. I went out on the land and learned to cut spruce again and go fishing, and became very interested in medicinal plants. I’m in fact working on this with a woman in Maliotenam. It’s very important to me. I’ve learned a lot and today I feel good because I’ve regained all that I had lost. I had lost the life that I was supposed to live as an Innu woman and I went to get it back. Now, it’s easy for me to live this life.

Behaviours and Knowledge of the Innu People

The Innu are a nomadic people, a people who travel over the land; and we are characteristically concerned with survival and living as a group. We have developed behaviours and knowledge that are the same for men and women. At 40 degrees Celsius below zero, it’s not the time to ask who does what: we have to survive and the work has to be done. But until recently, some tasks were still divided between men and women: the

man's role was as a provider, and the woman's role was to transmit the culture. Times have changed a lot today: women also have the role of provider, the man's role in addition to that of transmission. We want to give men back their role as providers; they have to take it back on their own. Men often say to us: "You've taken our role. What are we going to do? What's left for us to do? Drink." That's what they say to us and that's what they do. It's a shame. Where we are, for the past two years, men have been meeting among themselves once a year to discuss subjects that concern them.

A Role of Transmission

In my search for identity, I've learned how to live in the bush and I can now manage pretty well. Once, when I was on the land, my granddaughter, who was 8 at the time, came to join me and followed me everywhere. Everything I did, she did. I could really feel my role of transmission: I taught her to set snares, hunt partridge, embroider, make bread, etc. I began to transmit my knowledge. Today, she is just as comfortable on the land as in the city. She lives well in both cultures. This is also our challenge as Innus: to be able to live in both cultures. Our capacity to adapt is strong enough for us to live in both cultures. I can live in the city and I can live on the land. I can fully live my culture and I'm comfortable with it. I want to transmit this way of doing things to my children and grandchildren. They deserve to live like that and not to be torn between two cultures, as I was.

Education: the Schools Don't Convey Our Values

This morning we talked about parents giving up. I understand this because I also dropped out, even though I understand the education system and can speak French. I dropped out because the schools don't convey my values. School is not a place that I can identify with; it's another culture. I see it as a school that assimilates, and that goes against my values. That's why I dropped out. But I didn't prevent my children from going to school, although I didn't encourage them either. My children nonetheless were successful in graduating.

Political Issues and Transmission

How am I going to transmit my knowledge and experiences through this big political machine that talks about the environment and the land? How am I going to get around this? In 1996, I was part of a group protesting against the SM-3 dam and was sentenced to ten days in jail and two years' probation. How am I going to transmit that? How can one be free in this whole system? A lot of land has been destroyed. Once, I went out to my father's land and my nephew said: "Don't be angry, Auntie": when I got to the land, there were no more trees. It was really sad to see. How can we transmit our culture through all this damage and destruction?

Pollution

There's also pollution. Now we go to look for the medicines, the plants, very far from the city, far away from pollution. Concerning acid rain, it has been linked to all the factories in Pittsburgh, in the United States, and to air currents carried right to the north of Sept-Îles, where we gather our plants. This is a situation that we have to think about. This winter, on Christmas Day, it was raining at the 55th parallel, in the Schefferville area. Animals were acting strangely due to the rain and the thaw.

Some Objectives Achieved... Despite Everything

We have Nintendo, poutine and reform, and through all this we have to leave a heritage. That's where we stand today. But we have still been able to do some good things. For example, the Innu language has been standardized. We've been working on the language for at least 25 years. There's an Innu language program at the Sept-Îles CEGEP and the private school may also make a request to teach our language. To me, this is recognition. We're beginning to be recognized. But the problem we have is who's going to take over this work; there aren't enough Innu language teachers.

We also have a therapy centre that uses traditional methods and is working very well. I think it's a shame that the person who opened this centre is getting a lot of criticism. We're pitting ourselves against one another; we don't seem to believe in each other any more, we're giving up on one another and we don't have faith in ourselves. But when a non-Aboriginal person is doing the therapy or the teaching, it's a good thing.

We're currently developing audiovisual-based teaching materials. We've dropped all the ministère de l'Éducation objectives. We said: "We're dropping all the Department's objectives, the reform, and we're basing everything on the Innu education system." It's very easy, very light, and very respectful; we follow the cycle of the animals, the cycle of traditional activities, and the seasons. Innus design the materials and the curriculum and do the teaching. The entire staff is Innu. And who approves our teaching materials? It is the elders, who provide the content as well. We'll also have an interactive website to promote the project, where young people can learn to make snowshoes or ask questions. We have a talent for adapting and we've gone directly to computers.

The Focus of my Work: Bringing the Two Cultures Together

I'm also a member of a harmonization committee in the Sept-Îles area that was set up because of confrontations between Innu and non-Innu youth. We organized a march on the theme: "Peace in the World and Peace Here Too." Before we can talk about peace around the world, we have to have peace where we are. For the past two years we've had a committee to bring people together, whose aim is to discuss activities that could be held to bring the two cultures closer, to be able to talk to one another without raising our fists or shouting, and it's going pretty well. At our last meeting, we welcomed people from Sept-Îles with tea and bannock. For many people, this was the first time they had come to Mani-Utenam.

As part of my job at the Institut culturel et éducatif montagnais, I'm also involved in a program to raise awareness of Aboriginal realities, designed for Quebec schools, whose aim is to teach kids about Aboriginal people and encourage the coming together of the two cultures. In the six years that the program has existed, we've visited about 45,000 Quebec schoolchildren and roughly thirty schools across Quebec. We also visit Innu schools.

Young Innus are now searching for their roots. To meet this need, we have a project called, in French, "le travail en forêt" [working in the forest], where young people receive traditional teachings from elders on the land. This project is held over a one- to two-month period and is available to all Innu communities. Recently, the Fédération des Femmes québécoises de la Montérégie asked whether they could come to the Côte-Nord to meet

us and get to know us better. We have no right to refuse such a request; it's the best way to get to know one another. I do a lot more work in the area of relations aimed at rapprochement. It's the focus of my work.

And Throughout all this: a Spiritual Quest

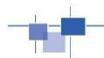
To conclude, throughout my entire journey and my search for identity, I've had to work on my spiritual side. When I was at residential school, I gave up on God. But I've felt an emptiness throughout my life, and was always searching for the meaning of life. One night, I attended a full moon ceremony. From that moment on, I came into contact with the spiritual dimension, the Moon and the Earth. I had just understood that this is what I was searching for. I'm still working on my spiritual quest. I do a lot of things, I attend sun dances in Dakota, I participate in ceremonies, and these things give me a great deal of satisfaction and inner peace. Thank you for listening.

Biography

ÉVELYNE ST-ONGE, an Innu from Mani-Utenam (Quebec), is the cultural coordinator for the Institut culturel et éducatif montagnais.

She runs the institute's program for building awareness of the Aboriginal reality among students in the province's schools.

A founding member of QNW, Ms. St-Onge remains highly active today in the Aboriginal milieu. She is a member of the board of directors for the Tangon youth hostel in Sept-Îles and a member of the board of directors for Kutikuniu, a support centre that uses traditional methods.



7.2 A Need for Continuous Learning: Traditional and Emerging Notions of Environmental Knowledge

LISA KOPERQUALUK, COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER
MAKIVIK CORPORATION

I work as a Communications Officer for Makivik Corporation, the representative of the Inuit of Northern Quebec. Makivik Corporation promotes Inuit culture and protects Inuit rights. It was created in 1978, right after the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, which we signed with the Crees of Quebec, the Quebec government, the Federal government, Hydro-Québec, and the société de développement de la Baie-James.

Traditional Roles of Inuit Women and Men

As I was preparing for this discussion on sharing environmental knowledge and territorial issues, I asked myself how I could relate this topic to Inuit women. Traditionally, knowledge about the environment, animal movements, navigation, and stars belonged in the realm of men. The role of Inuit women was closer to home, although it still required knowledge about animals. Employing their expert hands, Inuit women used every single part of the animal. They sewed the extra-warm clothing adapted to the Arctic and helped make the kayak, the skin boat, the tents, the shelter; they were guardians of their homes and their children, ensuring that everybody lived a healthy life. Women also acted as midwives.

The traditional roles of Inuit women and men were very clearly established in the old days. When a man had his eyes on a woman, she had to be able to sew and take care of the house. But in order for him to win her as his wife, he, too, had to fulfill certain expectations: he needed to have a kayak and a dog team. He had to be able to go and hunt and get a caribou and fish and catch ptarmigan. She was, as it were, a gauge to his capability. But even when he gained that capability, he still had to win her. He had to chase after her and catch her before even considering consuming the relationship.

I heard a noteworthy version of this story a few months ago, listening to a group of elderly men and enjoying their talk. The young man in the story had become a hunter and was chasing after the woman he desired. She was running away from him, and he was unable to catch up with her, as she was very agile. He stopped in the middle of his way and just started crying. I mention this story not to laugh at men but to show that Inuit women's role was very demanding, and this ensured that we would not just survive, but establish a way of living in the Arctic.

Shifting Roles

Today, the old men and women reminisce about the times gone by. They realize that our entire lifestyle has changed. The intrusion of a foreign society, forcing its values onto ours, has been a great strain. Still, the way in which we have adapted to it is remarkable. Our values have shifted, and the former demands on Inuit men and Inuit women seem to have become less strict, but other requirements have replaced these. This means that the role of Inuit women has shifted—we are just beginning to redefine our role in our society and in the international world. One important element to remember is that the family is most of all responsible for keeping our language, Inuktitut, alive. Within their homes, young people

are learning the Inuit values. Yet, outside influences distract them on a daily basis. Most people have a television, a snowmobile and Internet access, and the youth may find that traditional knowledge is no longer that useful for them today.

Using Traditional Knowledge Towards New Ends

The change in such values is a global phenomenon, but in our society it is particularly striking because of the short time in which this change took place. We traditionally relate the environment to the land, and the land is related to survival, hunting strategy, navigation, and animals. Globalization has had a huge impact because of the gap created in traditional knowledge. The challenge for us is to transfer knowledge related to the environment and the land onto new notions of environmental knowledge, such as the protection of the environment, environmental remediation, and specific land uses, such as in ecotourism. Before I get into this, I want to discuss the importance of the Inuktitut language.

The Importance of Inuktitut in the Transfer of Environmental Knowledge

When we speak of the transmission of knowledge through observation and oral tradition, we realize that changes have occurred. Although many stories are still being told, and we must still learn through observation, as we remain a hunting society, these traditions are complemented by the transmission of knowledge through a formal system of education. We must sit down to learn to read and write. The responsibility of education lies with a foreign institution, and we are willing participants—we bring our children to the schools and we also become teachers, educators, and administrators in the present school system, the Kativik School Board.

The Kativik School Board was also created right after the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, through special legislation of the Quebec government. Because Inuktitut is recognized as an Aboriginal language in Quebec, we can teach our language in the first three years of elementary school. Even though Quebec maintains a strict policy regarding the protection of the French language, at least it recognizes the importance of Aboriginal languages.

The teachers of elementary level Inuktitut are all Inuit women—Inuit men do not seem to get involved in formally teaching younger children. So the importance of the role of Inuit women at this level is growing. They become the transmitters of the Inuktitut language. Inuktitut identifies us as Inuit, as it identifies us with our land, because of the activities taking place there that are directly related to hunting, gathering, and camping. Hunting seals, for example, was subject to a very specific language, especially if it was done through a breathing hole in the ice. There was a complete set of language just related to seal hunting through a breathing hole. Because we do not hunt seals like this anymore, we are no longer using the language for it. But at least this is preserved in the archives of the Avataq Cultural Institute.

As caretakers of Inuit communities and transmitters of the Inuktitut language, Inuit women, then, have a very special role in our society. We see this played out also through the Pauktuutit National Inuit Women's Association, which has looked at issues such as family

violence, children's health, poverty, and teenage pregnancy. These are all issues that women bring to the attention of Inuit society in general.

PCBs: Toxic Contaminants in the Arctic

But I want to return to the need to relate our traditional affinity with the land to current environmental concerns. Over the last decade, it has become clear that there is a great need to protect our environment. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, scientists analyzing the breast milk of Inuit women discovered that our supposedly pure and pristine environment was being contaminated by PCBs, pollutants coming from the South. These pollutants travelled from the United States, Asia, and Europe in the snow, in the ice, in the seals, in the beluga. These toxic contaminants put our health at risk. It is through the unfailing efforts of Sheila Watt-Cloutier, the Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, that the international world is learning about the presence of toxic contaminants in the Arctic. She continues to fight to protect the Arctic environment, which is a way to protect our health, our way of life, our culture.

Environmental Remediation

I also mentioned environmental remediation as a notion that we must take into account in our knowledge of the environment. Many spots in the Arctic have been used by outsiders, for example as army bases set up by the United States or by the Canadian army for the purposes of national defence. Many of these sites became contaminated, and were never cleaned when they were abandoned. We have to push to make sure that these spots are cleaned up properly so that they stop damaging the soil and the animals on which we rely for our subsistence. Due to the permafrost and the short summer season, it is quite a challenge to clean these sites in an efficient manner because this requires elaborate logistics and a lot of equipment, knowledge, and human resources. The federal government is setting up programs to help remediate the sites, but we have to remain alert that actual progress is made, and much more must be done. We also have a responsibility in educating ourselves about the products that are coming into our Arctic environment. We buy all kinds of products that are harmful to our environment, such as disposable diapers, plastics, and hazardous materials. We buy snowmobiles and dump them when they break down. Recycling should become a priority in each of the communities so as to minimize pollution.

Ecotourism

Ecotourism is a way of drawing tourists' attention to our beautiful country and inviting them to visit our communities, to experience our culture, and to learn about us. In Nunavik, three new parks are being created in order to welcome tourists to our place. As Inuit women, we should position ourselves so as to be able to accommodate these tourists and benefit from them. We can feed them and guide them in our communities; we can talk to them and teach them a little bit of our language, as we like to do.

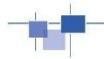
The recurring theme in my conference was that we constantly need to engage in learning. As a start, we should educate ourselves about the importance of our environment, of our land, because this is directly related to our culture and our language.

Biography

LISA KOPERQUALUK is employed by Makivik Corporation as a Communications Officer and works out of the Makivik office in Ville St-Laurent. Born in Puvirnituk, Quebec, on the eastern shores of Hudson Bay, her experience of living outside the North has given her the capacity to become fluent in the three languages she works in (English, French and Inuktitut).

She works to make Inuit visible as a participating society in the globe.

Raised with traditional values by her grandparents,
Lisa Koperqualuk is also a thoroughly modern and progressive woman.



7.3 Learning from the Elders: Researching Climate Change, Reconnecting with Traditions

NOAT EINISH, PROJECT MANAGER
NASKAPI NATION OF KAWAWACHIKAMACH

It is a great honour for me to be here in Mohawk territory. I come from Kawawachikamach, which means winding river in Naskapi. It is located almost in the heart of Quebec. I speak Cree-Naskapi, which is the language spoken in my community—the second language is English. I have worked extensively as a social worker, alcohol and drug counsellor, for instance in Port-Cartier’s correctional centre, with Native inmates, and I participated in an HIV project organized by Health Canada as well as in Naskapi translation projects. But most of all, I like to work with elders. And I am here to talk about my experiences interviewing them on the subject of their concerns about the environment.

The Naskapi Community in Schefferville

Fifty years ago, in 1956, the Naskapi people were moved to Schefferville, a mining town. There were about 30 families at that time—now there are 800 of us. The Naskapi were the last nomadic people of the northern region who were to be “civilized.” I was 7 years old when I was sent to school. I was told not to speak my language, and went to church twice a day. But the authorities failed in this scheme: I still speak my language. When I went back home to my community after having been in residential school, I wanted to change everything. There were many social, political, and educational problems. Although we had a band council, non-Native consultants would have the last word on decisions to be made in our community.

A Research Project on Climate Change

About a year ago, Chief Elijah Einish asked me if I would be willing to get involved in a project on climate change, because of my interest in our culture and in traditional knowledge. This meant that I would have to meet with elders, travel, and do field research. Chief Elijah Einish passed away in July last year, but I will always be grateful that he got me involved in this project. The elders I interview trace the roads on the maps in northern Quebec through ancient hunting and fishing grounds. I also interview them about changes in the thickness of the ice.

Effects of Climate Change on the Naskapi Way of Life

In each of the Inuit communities, there are people who do the same work as I do, and we communicate on a regular basis. Since the beginning of winter, I measure the thickness of the ice in several lakes around Kawawachikamach, about 20 kilometres from my reserve. The Inuit say that the ice is not as thick as it used to be and that they cannot go to the same places they used to go with their snowmobiles. In the Naskapi area, lakes freeze later than before and the ice does not stay as long. Last fall, the lake froze in November instead of October. In May, we used to go snowmobiling on lakes. But we cannot do that any longer. On the other hand, it has been very cold in the winter, between minus 40 and minus 50, and cold spells lasted weeks instead of days. Contrary to the rest of northern

Canada, it seems that Schefferville winters are getting colder—this is based on several years of observation.

The changes in the ice cover affect goose hunting in the spring. We used to leave for the hunt in late April or early May. We would go to a lake site, set up camp, and put decoys in some warm spots, where the ice would thaw earlier than elsewhere. Last year, the geese flew up later. Lakes thawed earlier. This meant that those who wanted to hunt as usual had to go very far north. Other hunters hunted in swamps around here, around the Kawawachikamach area, with little success. Only one or two geese per household were taken. Those who went north were more successful. So climate changes are already having an impact on our way of life. The elders tell me that these changes can also be seen in plants. For instance, blueberries have become smaller and we have to go further from the village to pick them. The elders are concerned that some plants will disappear from our territory because of these changes.

Pollution is said to be responsible for climate changes. The elders have noticed that the rain is not the same. They used to wash their hair with rainwater; they say that it contains natural conditioner. But it does not have that effect now. The elders think that this is because of the pollution. They blame pollution also for deformities in fish, although these are rare: one lake trout with a large lump on its back was fished last summer.

A Hike with the Elders from Schefferville to Kuujjuaq

Last week, junior rangers and their instructors left for a trip from Kawawachikamach to Kuujjuaq. I asked them to pay careful attention and report any changes that they might notice. I also asked them to measure ice thickness and take notes on it. In my work, when I was listening to the elders talking about the routes and trails they used to roam, it struck me that they sometimes expressed themselves in old language. I did not always understand what they meant. This gave me the idea of doing a two-month project early next year, which will involve a hike from Schefferville to Kuujjuaq with a group of Naskapi, including most of our elders and representatives from every generation. The elders, even though some of them have health problems, expect that it will take them about a week to get their old rhythm back. They will teach the younger generations what they used to do.

I am sure that all participants will learn a lot from that trip. First of all the language—there is a lot of Naskapi vocabulary that we never used, so we never learned it. But by being in the bush and travelling in the way in which our ancestors used to travel, with our snowshoes and sleds, we will learn how they used to survive. We will take a minimum of modern tools and objects with us, only those few items that we need for safety, such as satellite phone and GPS, in case something happens and someone has to be evacuated urgently.

Reconnecting with Traditions: a Healing Process

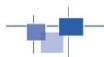
The elders say that they used to be very happy if they had bannock and rabbits, and I want to experience that happiness by reconnecting with our traditions. At the end of our journey, I expect us to be in good health, with a lot of energy and with an inner peace that we have not experienced before. We will also learn a lot about our environment and how to live as a

part of it. I hope to come back here and tell you all about it. This trip will be part of a healing process for all Naskapi generations.

The elders will say to us, “Those lands are just waiting for us to come back to them,” adding that, “Without spirituality, you are not whole.” We need three elements: body, mind, and spirit. Caribou will be there waiting for us still, to provide us with food, clothing, and tools. I invite you to come and visit us: we will teach you our traditions.

Biography

NOAT EINISH is from the Naskapi nation of Kawawachikamach (Quebec). She has a strong interest in environmental and related issues and possesses great knowledge about plants, herbs and traditional medicine. She is actively involved in various cultural and traditional activities, working closely with the elders of her community. She is currently working for the Naskapi band council, collaborating, among other projects, in a research on the issue of climate change commissioned by the Kativik Regional Government.



Eighth Part

A Changing Economy

8.1 An Employment Service for Aboriginal People in Urban Areas

DOLORÈS ANDRE, COORDINATOR

FIRST NATIONS HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT, COMMISSION OF MONTREAL

After finishing my studies, I worked for the Native Friendship Centre of Montreal in various jobs related to community social development. I then wanted to fulfill my strong desire to help Aboriginal people living in urban areas, especially students; to give them tips to improve their situation and to help them find a job. We submitted a project application to Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) and that's when we set up an employment service for Aboriginal people in urban areas, supported by the Native Friendship Centre of Montreal and funded by HRDC.

The day the employment service was launched, we only had a table, a chair, a pencil, some sheets of paper, and five clients already waiting in line. We didn't have any tools or knowledge in this area. It was only because of our wish to help that we found solutions and set up an employment service that gradually also met the needs of the clientele. The Montreal employment service has now been in existence for over ten years.

A Growing Mandate

In 1999, all employment and training services were transferred over to the jurisdiction of the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador, under an agreement with HRDC for the transfer to the communities of budgets and decision-making powers on the implementation of Aboriginal employment structures. This agreement resulted in the setting up of 22 Local First Nations Commissions serving as job centres in the communities. The agreement also led to the creation of the First Nations Human Resources Development Commission of Quebec, which is made up of 22 representatives from each member community and two associate members, including the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtone du Québec (Association of Native Friendship Centres of Quebec) and Quebec Native Women. In 1999, a new agreement was signed with HRDC: the Urban Strategy. Under this agreement, three service points were established, in Montreal, Val-d'Or and Quebec, and two regional offices: one in Roberval, and one in Ottawa. The mandate of the First Nations Human Resources Development Commission of Quebec is to help First Nations Aboriginal people, Métis and Inuit integrate or re-integrate the job market and provide training for them. Its mandate also includes setting up training programs that are adapted to community realities. In 2004, we funded the participation of more than 500 people in training and employment programs, 57% of whom were women.

Transferring Our Knowledge

At the Montreal employment service, we meet a very diversified clientele coming from various nations across Quebec and Canada. We meet people who want to improve their living conditions and have a place in society; young people who are finding it hard to adjust to the job market or to go back to school; people who don't necessarily have a permanent address; and single mothers. The services offered in the urban service points are all similar and one of the pursued objectives is to transfer our knowledge to employment agents in the communities. All the employment agents meet three times a year to discuss working techniques and the setting up of our services.

In the Montreal, Val-d'Or and Quebec service points, we post job offers and provide information on training programs in our communities. We teach clients to use technology to look for jobs, and make computers available to them. We help them prepare their *curriculum vitae* and cover letters and work with them to develop their action plan. We meet employers and help them become more aware of Aboriginal culture. I've designed a three-hour training program for them for this purpose.

Job Needs of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Living in Urban Areas

Our mission is to determine the job needs of our urban clientele, whether they are First Nations, Métis or Inuit, in order to help them take initiatives and reach their goals. To do this, I also act as an employment counsellor. At first, clients expected me to find them a job right away. Montreal is a big city, and when people come here, they think that it's easy to find a job. But to survive in Montreal, you need to have education, work experience and basic training. So, in the beginning, that's what we did: we found them jobs. But we weren't helping them by doing this, so we changed our working and counselling approaches to empower clients so that they could become more independent in their life or career paths.

Measures Adapted to Aboriginal Realities

To do this, when I meet with clients, I identify their background, job experience and education and determine their needs and the obstacles they face in order to better identify their goals and the actions needed to attain them. Once we've identified all these aspects, established the options and drawn up a plan, we help, guide and direct clients toward a measure that suits their aspirations. Then, if needed, we direct them to a general academic training measure. General academic training consists of helping the person to finish their secondary studies and get the prerequisites for a DEP (vocational school diploma). Once the general training is done, the person will be directed to a professional training measure; and throughout the course of their training, we help them out financially, with the assistance varying according to the person's family situation. After the general and professional training, there's another program: the employability measure. This consists in giving employers incentives to encourage them to hire Aboriginal people and enable the individual to gain work experience in his or her study area. The Job creation initiative normally runs from 6 to 12 months, depending on the type of job. We also ask employers to make a financial contribution. There's another program called Self-employment assistance, which has two facets. The first is the pre-startup, when we provide financial assistance to help the individual draw up a business plan. Once the business plan is completed, the client goes on to the second facet: startup. In this phase, we support clients for a one-year period so that they can carry out their business plan and set up their small business. One of our clients took advantage of our programs and set up her own cabinet-making business in her region.

All these measures, which are available in all the communities, have been adapted to Aboriginal realities. During the entire process, there is monthly follow-up with the client, the employer or the educational institution. Due to the diversity of the clientele, needs are many and varied. The obstacles encountered by our clientele, whether they are women, young people or men, are lack of self-esteem and self-knowledge; poor or non-existent working methods; the difficulty of maintaining motivation and the lack of interest; the lack of a specific or realistic objective; poor mastery of English or French; little knowledge of

information technology; or, quite simply, the fact that they don't have a babysitter or a permanent address.

What Resources Are Available for Women Who Leave Their Communities?

One of the reasons that women leave their communities is that they are often afraid to advance within their community and to realize their potential, frequently because of gossiping, jealousy or competition between women and within the community. These situations affect women's personal and professional development. Women also mention that they leave their communities because of the lack of jobs, or to continue their education.

Together with the Native Friendship Centre of Montreal and the Native Women's Shelter of Montreal, we offer a training program called Basic personal skills development. This program includes training on self-evaluation, self-knowledge, budget preparation, attitudes to work, and the development of individual capacities and job skills. We also provide information on labour standards, and offer basic English or French classes and basic information technology courses. A section on Aboriginal culture has also been integrated to the training program.

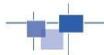
The Constantly-Changing Employment Sector

To conclude, I would just like to say that the employment sector is constantly changing and developing. We feel that the fact that an individual has completed one of the steps in his or her action plan is already a change for the economy. We take a small-scale view of the economy, on the everyday level of the person, in order to thus ensure his or her development.

Finally, I would just like to extend special thanks to my mother, who is here, for having passed on her knowledge to me and so contributed to what I am today. I would also like to congratulate Édith Cloutier for her nomination as female role model for the Aboriginal urban population. She has also been one of my role models. Thank you very much.

Biography

DOLORÈS ANDRÉ, an Innu from Matimekush (Quebec), is coordinator of the First Nations Human Resources Development Commission of Quebec in Montréal. She has been active in the fields of employment and training since 1992, and worked for the Native Friendship Centre of Montreal on various community development initiatives.



8.2 A Freight Company... That's Moving Right Along

JACINTHE PETIQUAY, PRESIDENT
TRANSPORT NOTCIMIK INC.

Kwé! Let me introduce myself: I'm Jacinthe Petiquay, president of Transport Notcimik. The company has been in existence since June 2002 and its main activity is transporting wood. I generally work with my spouse, who is director of operations and a forestry engineer. He's the one with the expertise in forestry. In our first two years of operation, our firm's annual sales were about \$3 million, and we expect this figure to double in the current year.

Fruitful Collaborations

As far as our activities go, we have a transport contract with Abitibi Consol in the Haute-Mauricie region. We load and transport wood from the forest to the plants concerned. We also do road maintenance; in winter, we clear and sand the roads. The operations director is in charge of recruiting the truckers and, in some cases, the trucking companies. Nearly fifty companies have worked for us since our firm was launched. We also have our own truck and hire a trucker to do the transport. Two Aboriginal people from the community of Wemotaci also each own a truck. From the start, our objective was to encourage people from the community to develop the trucking and transport sector because a lot of wood is transported along the road leading to our community. We try to encourage people to acquire their own truck and thus create jobs in the community.

In ten months of operations, in the first year, we transported about 100,000 cubic metres of wood. Today, we transport double that, that is, 225,000 cubic metres, representing approximately 6,000 trips a year. On the level of our activities related to the Hydro-Atikamekw agreement (1988), we carried out five contracts. The work was mainly clearing the shorelines and dams along the St-Maurice River, brush cutting for the La Tranche and Rapide-Blanc dam and clearance of brushwood for the La Tuque power station dam. We also did vegetation control in the Parent-LaVérendrye area. These projects amounted to roughly \$450,000, and we created approximately 75 jobs that lasted an average of two months each.

A Collectively Profitable Economic Contribution

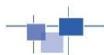
In terms of the economic contribution that our firm makes, Transport Notcimik employs four people full time in the bush, plus two people for administration, especially for current loading and transport operations. A total of 75 people have worked for the firm to date, including 21 people on social assistance and 54 on employment insurance. This allows people to continue receiving unemployment insurance, and get off welfare. We paid out wages and salaries totalling nearly \$300,000, and we buy \$40,000 to \$60,000 worth of fuel a year. We pay \$20,000 a year for our employees' accommodation. Aboriginal workers are recruited with the help of the Commission de développement des ressources humaines de Wemotaci (Wemotaci human resources development board). The company is located in La Tuque. We have a garage to do maintenance on our truck as well as road maintenance equipment: a sander and a loader.

Why a Company in the Forestry Sector?

We had a business opportunity in the La Tuque region after the former contractor retired. With my spouse's expertise in the forestry sector and my administrative experience, we said to ourselves: "Why not develop the company and continue in this sector?" We recycled equipment from another firm that had ceased its operations—office equipment, computer equipment—and then we developed the company. That's all. Thank you.

Biography

JACINTHE PETIQUAY, owner of Transport Notcimik inc., is originally from the Atikamekw community of Wemotaci, Quebec. She played an important role in reactivating the agreement between Hydro-Québec and the members of her community, especially in regard to control over the mechanical and chemical processes of vegetation control. Operating in a traditionally male work environment, her major contribution to the development of her community's local and regional economy was recognized at the Mishtapew Gala, where she was named businesswoman of the year for 2003.



8.3 Nunavik Creations: Tapping into Traditional Inuit Knowledge

VICTORIA OKPIK, DESIGNER
NUNAVIK CREATIONS

My paper is about Nunavik Creations, how and why it was started and how it has helped the people of Nunavik. Nunavik Creations was created by Makivik Corporation two years ago in collaboration with the Department of Economic Development. Makivik Corporation is a development corporation created in 1978 under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. Since then, it has also created Air Inuit, and it bought First Air, which is the third largest airline in Canada. Makivik also created Nunavik Arctic Foods and runs shrimp fisheries, as well as other subsidiary companies.

A Clothing Store in Kuujuaq

In its aim to develop Nunavik, Makivik looks at areas of Inuit expertise. Inuit clothing was one of these. Hence, an idea for a clothing store became a reality when the store, Nunavik Creations, was opened in Kuujuaq in March 2003. This company is run by women and it is managed by Austin Greene, who oversees the store in Kuujuaq and takes care of the financial aspects of the company. I work for the company as its fashion designer. The objective was to promote traditional Inuit crafts in the Nunavik region, while creating new jobs and achieving greater financial self-sufficiency in the communities. Besides, the enterprise has provided Inuit women with a living, using their traditional knowledge of Inuit clothing.

Three Markets for Inuit Garments

Nunavik Creations is responsible for promoting and facilitating the production and sales of Inuit clothing in the North, the South, and on the Internet. The ultimate objective is to offer these three markets the full line of products made by members of Nunavik communities. Currently, we have three sewing centres operating in three communities. Each centre employs three seamstresses when it is production time. Seamstresses are paid per piece. The garments we produce include parkas, mittens, *kamiks*, sealskin vests, hats, and the *amauti*, which is the traditional coat for carrying the baby on one's back.

Benefits for Inuit Women As Expert Seamstresses

Nunavik Creations has been very beneficial to Inuit women in four ways: firstly, it offers Inuit women the opportunity to use their knowledge and to maintain ownership of their knowledge. Secondly, it promotes Inuit women as a group, at the global level. Thirdly, seamstresses are given the opportunity to use their expertise towards employment. Fourthly, it allows Inuit women to be recognized as expert seamstresses. Nunavik Creations also produces products locally for our Nunavik Creations store and for other organizations—for example, we have made the parkas for the Arctic Winter Games, which are held every two years, and for the Kativik regional government, and we have also produced the uniforms for Air Inuit ticket agents.

Bringing Recognition to the Inuit of Nunavik

By marketing our clothing on the website and at trade fairs and fashion shows, we bring recognition to the Inuit of Nunavik. Our fashion shows have taken place in international settings, including Russia and Norway. As a result, awareness of Inuit culture has increased.

The creation of this company, with the participation of Inuit women, has promoted socioeconomic development in the region. Women who have no higher education can make a living, and women who did not have a role in our economic development before are now contributing to society at large. Since many of these women are supporting children and grandchildren, they can put the extra income to good use.

Biography

Born in Quaqtaq, Nunavik, VICTORIA OKPIK works at the Makivik Corporation as a designer. She studied Fashion Design at Lasalle College. Her interests and ambitions are to promote locally Inuit-made designs that are fashionable and practical for everyone, while sharing her culture through the ability and know how of Inuit women in making clothing that are effective for the cold climate.

