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A Message from the CEO

To mark the first real-time vigil in three years, more than a hundred people, including YWCA members, joined Carol McBride, president of the Native Women's Association of Canada, on October 4. With candles in hand, participants walked from our new head office in Gatineau, Quebec, to Parliament Hill, where they released 100 dove-shaped balloons into the night sky.

NWAC started the Sisters in Spirit vigils in 2006 in honour of the thousands of missing and murdered women, girls, and Two-Spirit people in Canada. That we were finally able to hold a live event since the beginning of the pandemic is doubly significant in light of the tremendous work that NWAC is doing to address the economic marginalization of Indigenous women.

At our Social, Cultural, and Economic Innovation Centre in Gatineau, which played host to a Faceless Dolls workshop prior to the walk, NWAC is building a microeconomy of artisans. The boutique on the ground floor, which features Indigenous



A Message from the CEO - Cont.



items from women across Canada and the Americas, is a hive of activity—a clear example of the success of NWAC's efforts to support our membership. Along with specialty items like the Reconciliation Coffee blend offered at the café, workshops continue to be popular and both government departments and private-sector companies have been booking meeting space at the centre.

The most recent partnership we entered into with the Trust for the Americas and the Organization of American States to launch a digital skills training initiative is another concrete example of NWAC's efforts to give Indigenous women the training they need to become self-sufficient.

NWAC is working hard to not only end the economic marginalization of Indigenous women and transgender people through social innovation and our #BeTheDrum program. We're also focused on ending violence against Indigenous women. That's why NWAC is standing behind the Indigenous woman facing criminal charges here in Canada and the U.S. for allegedly abducting her child.

And, of course, NWAC continues to advance the work we are doing in the areas of water and biodiversity conservation, climate change policy, the need for culturally relevant gender-based analysis in Indigenous research on renewable energy and health issues, and preserving Indigenous culture and languages. These are all critical issues for Indigenous women and transgender people.

This issue of *Shining the Spotlight* carries stories on our latest work in all these areas ... and more.

Lynne Groulx







Preserving, Promoting, and Developing Indigenous Culture and Indigenous Languages

Through our social development work, NWAC:

- educates the people we represent on current-day inequities
- engages in research that supports the well-being of Indigenous women, girls, transgender, and gender-diverse people
- protects Indigenous knowledge and promotes the transfer of knowledge to new generations
- offers a network of healing and connection as well as safe places for healing, to reduce violence against Indigenous women and children

NWAC's social development team marked Truth and Reconciliation Day and Orange Shirt Day, on September 30, through a story-telling event and the sharing of factual recorded evidence of the crimes against Indigenous families and children. The event, held in the new Social, Cultural, and Economic Innovation Centre, was impactful.



Preserving, Promoting, and Developing Indigenous Culture and Indigenous Languages - CONT.

Irene Goodwin, NWAC's Director of Evidence to Action, oversaw an art exhibit that focused on the dark side of the residential school system—taking Indigenous children away from their parents. The harm caused by this system continues to impact Indigenous families and communities.

For the language project, the team has developed Indigenous language cards in Michif (language of the Métis), Inuktitut (language of the Inuit), and various languages spoked by members of the Algonquin people) for business, clients, and public. The cards are available at



Staff member Kecia (to the right) and her sister on Truth and Reconciliation Day





Staff member Brandi on Truth and Reconciliation Day

NWAC's headquarters, the Social, Cultural, and Economic Innovation Centre. Many people are also signing up for our online live language sessions.

Over the fall months, we will continue to roll out videos and other resources, create displays, and promote the range of opportunities that are available on these Indigenous languages.



We are looking forward to conducting winter solstice activities and pipe ceremonies in November.

Advancing the Healing Work of the Chelsea Resiliency Lodge

Now that summer is over and fall has arrived, the Chelsea Resiliency Lodge has served as a focal point for rekindling relationships within the community. In addition to a place for holding ceremonies, healing circles, and retreats, the lodge has provided a safe place to support community members and service workers in the Indigenous community in their healing journeys. Traditional Knowledge Keepers are a key component in the teachings, sweats, pipe ceremonies, and protection ceremonies that we can provide at the lodge.

NWAC has been in discussions with Lancôme, Sephora, and other corporate supporters on how they can help us provide virtual and in-person workshops designed to build confidence.

To this end, NWAC was honoured to have been invited to L'Oréal's head office this fall to give a faceless doll workshop. Raising awareness and making connections in the corporate world is vital to NWAC's ability to effect positive change.









SISTERS IN SPIRIT VIGIL AND UPDATED SAFE PASSAGE WEBSITE MARK BUSY FALL FOR MMIWG DEPARTMENT

NWAC's MMIWG department was very busy in September and October overseeing two major projects, the Sisters in Spirit annual vigil and the launch of the Safe Passage website.

On October 4, we held the 19th annual Sisters in Spirit vigil—the first in-person vigil since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In partnership with the YWCA, NWAC hosted 55 YWCA members from across the country at our head office in Gatineau, Quebec. We gathered together, feasted, and participated in a Faceless Dolls workshop and Sisters in Spirit poster-making session. The evening began with an opening prayer from an NWAC Elder and then an impactful speech from NWAC President Carol McBride. The president spoke of the immediate action that must be taken to implement the National Inquiry's 231 Calls to Justice to end all violence against Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people.



Sisters in Spirit Vigil and Updated Safe Passage Website Mark Busy Fall for MMIWG Department - CONT.

With candles and Sisters in Spirit posters in hand, approximately 100 NWAC staff, YWCA members, MMIWG2S+ families and community members, and allies walked from NWAC's head office to Parliament Hill at 6:30 p.m., where a vigil was held. YWCA Executive Director Raine Liliefeldt opened the vigil with a moving reminder about the importance of allyship and reconciliation. Following Ms. Liliefeldt's remarks, a traditional Anishinabe-Kwe song was performed by local Indigenous youth. The vigil closed with a prayer from an NWAC Elder and the release of 100 white dove balloons into the night sky to symbolize the almost 4,000 missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

In addition to the in-person vigil, the MMIWG team had also coordinated the shipment of Sisters in Spirit kits to organizations across the country that were conducting their own vigils.

On October 4, we also launched an updated Safe Passage website.

Along with the existing MMIWG2S+ map and reporting tool that tracks the number of MMIWG2S+ cases across Canada, the revised site features a new "Unsafe Encounters" reporting tool. The tool was added to monitor ongoing safety concerns. A new community resource map shows safety resources by type and region across the country in an effort to prevent some of the violence that Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people experience.

























NWAC Stands Behind Indigenous Domestic Abuse Victim Who Fled to the U.S.

NWAC's legal unit is monitoring the case of an Indigenous woman facing criminal charges in both the U.S. and Canada for allegedly abducting her child and fleeing to the United States. Her identity is under a publication ban to protect her child's identity. We will use the pseudonym JD.

JD is a prominent member of her Indigenous community in Saskatchewan and held a high-profile business position before she disappeared in summer 2022. In July, her vehicle and personal belongings were found in a Saskatoon park after coworkers reported her missing a day before, along with her seven-year-old child. Community members and police launched a search for JD and her child. Two weeks later, Saskatoon police announced that JD and her child had been found safe in Oregon state, alongside evidence she staged her and her child's disappearance.

Oregon police charged JD with aggravated identity theft. Canadian authorities charged her with parental abduction and public mischief.



NWAC Stands Behind Indigenous Domestic Abuse Victim Who Fled to the U.S. - CONT.

JD released a public statement through legal counsel, explaining that her decision to leave was prompted by her fears for her and her child's safety related to a long-time domestic abuse cycle. JD cited a lack of police assistance when she reported the abuse. She connected her experience as an abuse victim and that of the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG) genocide: "So many women and children before us have had to run for their lives to protect their children. I am fighting systems that continuously fail to protect me as an Indigenous woman and [that continue to] protect non-Indigenous men."



JD's case highlights the prejudices that Indigenous women experiencing family violence face within the criminal justice system. The MMIWG National Inquiry provided comprehensive findings outlining the barriers that Indigenous women face when seeking justice, especially as violence survivors. The findings describe systemic biases against believing Indigenous women, patterns of ignoring their complaints, failures to investigate, and long histories of devaluing them as Indigenous women in what the Inquiry ultimately found to be a genocide.

JD said she felt she had "no other choice" but to flee with her child.

JD was returned to Canada to face charges and her child was returned to the care of a family member. She was granted bail and will face a hearing to address her charges soon.

NWAC's legal unit and the organization as a whole stand behind JD as she navigates a system that seeks to penalize her for the difficult choice she made when she felt she had few other options available to her as an Indigenous woman.







New Partnership Aims to Open Up Economic Opportunities for Indigenous Peoples in Canada

NWAC has entered into a powerful new partnership with the Trust for the Americas and the Organization of American States (OAS). The joint announcement took place on September 28, 2022, from Washington, DC, and Gatineau, Quebec—two days before the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

The new POETA DigiSpark Canada Project (POETA stands for Partnerships for Economic Opportunities through Technology in the Americas is the Canadian launch of a digital skills training initiative for Indigenous Peoples in this country. As a tool to help end the economic marginalization of Indigenous Peoples in this country, the project addresses one of the Calls for Justice identified by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) in its Final Report.

By federal government estimates, there will soon be 8,000 vacancies in the technology sector.

Lynne Groulx, NWAC's Chief Executive Officer, who joined the Washington, DC, announcement of the launch of the Canadian project virtually from Gatineau, Quebec, indicated that only 2.2% of workers in the tech workforce in Canada are Indigenous. "This is unacceptable. We need to urgently fill this gap. We need to take concrete action such as this project to end economic marginalization," she said.



New Partnership Aims to Open Up Economic Opportunities for Indigenous Peoples in Canada - CONT.



The POETA program started in 2004, followed by the POETA DigiSpark project in 2012, and now operates in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Puerto Rico, and Uruguay. The Canadian pilot project marks the first time that POETA DigiSpark will be run with a partner in Canada. NWAC was chosen to be the local Canadian partner.

Training will be offered out of NWAC's new Social, Cultural, and Economic Innovation Centre in Gatineau. It will also be offered remotely so that those living outside the National Capital Region can take part. Upon completion, participants will receive a certificate of competence.

In his closing remarks at the launch announcement, Luis Almagro, Secretary General of the OAS, stated: "According to the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, I see how this project targets critical issues that affect indigenous Peoples in the hemisphere. The success of the project should become an example to achieve inclusive, sustainable, social, and economic development with indigenous communities and the region as a whole."

This is the meeting room at NWAC's Social, Cultural, and Economic Innovation Centre that will be used for the POETA DigiSpark Canada Project.











Dementia Research That's Rooted in Cultural Connection and Community

NWAC's collective goal of enhancing the lives of Indigenous women, girls, transgender, and gender-diverse people extends to all stages of life. One of the ways we meet this commitment is through our work in the area of dementia research.

The bulk of our research work has revolved around two multi-year projects funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada. These projects are "Stigma: An Exploration of Lived Experiences, Understandings and Behaviours of Dementia within Indigenous Communities" and "Supporting a Circle of Care: A Culturally-Informed Support Group and Toolkit for Indigenous Caregivers of People Living with Dementia." These projects seek to find evidenced-based and culturally relevant ways of improving the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of Indigenous people living with dementia and their caregivers.

To date, NWAC has produced several resources grounded in Indigenous methodologies and ways of knowing. These resources include a storybook, entitled A Sacred Journey: The Long Goodbye, and the toolkit Addressing Dementia Related Stigma with Indigenous Specific Strategies.





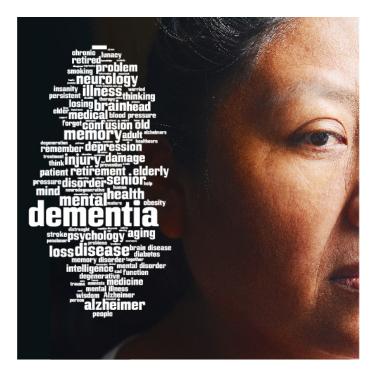
Dementia Research That's Rooted in Cultural Connection and Community - CONT.

Extensive consultation with Elders, Indigenous women, and gender-diverse people has revealed the ways that cultural understandings of dementia can contribute to reducing stigma. For instance, as highly respected members of their communities, older Indigenous adults are recognized for their ability to contribute to traditional roles, such as passing on their knowledge and life experiences. Reducing stigma not only increases people's likelihood of seeking care and support, but significantly lowers the risk for abuse and neglect. We shared these findings through a recent Dementia Awareness Campaign, which ran online for several weeks in September. As a result of the racism, sexism, and discrimination many Indigenous people living with dementia experience when accessing health care, NWAC remains committed to developing culturally safe and trauma-informed resources.

We are currently working on a toolkit that addresses the needs of Indigenous caregivers of loved ones with dementia. This toolkit will feature prominently in future engagement sessions, which will seek to expand the capacity of Indigenous caregivers to care for their loved ones by enhancing their understanding of dementia and improving their ability to manage the evolving and ongoing progression of the disease.

When caregivers struggle physically and mentally, the level of care that people living with dementia receive is compromised.

Mitigating the stress and burden felt by Indigenous caregivers is crucial to improving the care their loved ones receive. To this end, NWAC's dementia research will continue explore ways of improving access to caregiver supports that are rooted in cultural connection and community; that reduce social isolation and burnout: and that increase and knowledge awareness about dementia among Indigenous communities.







NWAC Participates in A SHARED Future's 2022 Summer Gathering

From July 18–22, 2022, NWAC was invited to participate in A SHARED Future's 2022 summer gathering, which took place on the unceded territories of the Mi'kmaw. The theme of the gathering was "Global Interconnectedness for Sustainable Energy Futures."

A SHARED Future (Achieving Strength, Health, and Autonomy through Renewable Energy Development for the Future) is a five-year research program that was established to document stories of healing and reconciliation through partnerships associated with renewable energy projects.

The program supports 10 thematically linked projects across Canada that study various types of intersectoral partnerships, with the focus on Indigenous Peoples' leadership in renewable energy conservation, efficiency, and development. The program examines how nation-to-nation collaboration and relationship building between Indigenous communities and Canadian institutions can help to foster reconciliation and healing with one another and the world around us.

NWAC has participated with A SHARED Future in the past. We collaborated on the project "Advancing Culturally Relevant Gender Based Analysis in Indigenous Research on Renewable Energy Futures and Health," the findings of which were published



NWAC Participates in A SHARED Future's - CONT.

September 2021 in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health. The initiative highlighted the nuances of implementing Indigenous gender-based analysis in an ethical, relationally grounded, and reciprocal way throughout different renewable energy research projects. It reference NWAC's culturally relevant gender-based analysis (CRGBA) framework as a useful lens from which to operationalize gender-based analysis that is distinctions- based, trauma-informed, and culturally relevant.

Given NWAC's relationship with A SHARED Future, along with their implementation of the CRGBA framework in multiple projects, NWAC was delighted to contribute to A SHARED Future's initiatives at the 2022 summer gathering.

The intent of the gathering was twofold: create a learning opportunity for trainees, knowledge users, and intersectoral participants who have been involved with A SHARED Future's respective projects; and make space to further cultivate and strengthen relationships.

With A SHARED Future entering its final year, this summer gathering focused on the linkages and research outputs of the co-led research projects taking place under its umbrella. Key thematic links that were discussed included:

- Ethical spaces of these projects, and the ethical, relational, and procedural challenges and opportunities for effecting positive change
- Culturally relevant gender-based analysis: Lessons learned and next steps
- Institutional ethnography reflecting on A SHARED Future's co-learning journeys
- Barriers/challenges from colonial systems, structures, and infrastructure to Indigenous renewable energy projects
- Commitment to action and identifying opportunities to enact change

Additional themes that arose throughout the course of discussions included:

- social sustainability
- how to meaningfully evaluate the impact of our respective projects and measure our work
- how to sustainably foster participants' and researchers' healing and wellness throughout our projects, identifying a link between the unnatural and unsustainable ways in which we control the flows of physical and mental and spiritual energy





NWAC Participates in A SHARED Future's - CONT.



Throughout the course of the thematic discussions, participants offered significant insights and critical feedback on NWAC's CRGBA framework, including:

- probing what is meant by the framework when referencing Indigenous knowledge as a key concept of the analytical process includes resisting pan-Indigenizing the concept of Indigenous and/or Traditional Knowledge and specifying the distinctions between the vast array of Indigenous knowledge systems on Turtle Island and Inuit Nunangat recognizing the importance of language as a conduit for Indigenous knowledge systems and ensuring that Indigenous languages are meaningfully incorporated throughout the analytical process
- emphasizing that values and responsibilities cannot be separated from Indigenous knowledge systems
- there are intentional ways in which knowledge is transmitted and how this knowledge influences and interacts with Indigenous Peoples' values, responsibilities, and how Indigenous Peoples govern themselves
- challenging the name (difficult to understand)

The summer gathering concluded with discussions around next steps and future goals of the participants. NWAC looks forward to maintaining ongoing relationships with the participants and to look for opportunities for future collaboration, including the use of the CRGBA framework in future research projects on renewable energy, economic development, and health issues.

Overall, NWAC is incredibly grateful and honoured to have been invited as a participant, and to have established such intentional, reciprocal relationships with other Indigenous researchers and community members. We look forward to hearing about A SHARED Future's next steps as the project enters the sun-setting phase.





Water, Fish, and Climate Issues Continue to Be Focus of Environment Unit

NWAC's environment unit will soon have completed our work on the Canadian Navigable Waters Act Project, with two of the three components done. We continue to work with Transport Canada to promote capacity building and enable participation in engagement and consultative processes that are of importance to Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender diverse people.

Preliminary findings from the initial data analysis point to a failure to include this group in provincial, territorial, and federal consultations, roundtables, and decision-making processes surrounding water management and navigable waters. This has resulted in a lack of gender balance and community representation within consultations and decision-making forums. Currently, the data from the national workshop and one-one interviews is being used to develop a high-level discussion paper.

Phase two of the Water Carriers Project focused on important resiliency and capacity-building work among Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people. During the process, we conducted six sharing circles in Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta in a one-month period. Participants were excited to share their knowledge on traditional water teachings and on what it means to be a water carrier in their communities. They also talked about the challenges posed by climate change.



Water, Fish, and Climate Issues Continue to Be Focus of Environment Unit - CONT.

In October and November, we will be hosting virtual sharing circles in other provinces and territories.

For the Canadian Red Cross, Inclusive Resilience Project, we held two kick-off meetings with the Red Cross representatives. In the coming weeks, we will be developing protocols and methodologies for engaging Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people on flood, fire, and earthquake issues. The Fish and Fish Habitat Protection Program is nearing completion, and is expected to end in 2023. Fisheries and Oceans Canada has, however, signalled that it may extend the program into 2024.

As part of the Biodiversity Project, we took part in discussions around targets 21 and 22 of the global biodiversity framework. Participants in the roundtable had the opportunity to discuss the wording of both targets—an important exercise as the perspectives will inform the contributions of Environment and Climate Change Canada at COP 15 in Montreal. Hopefully, some of the ideas shared during the biodiversity roundtable will be included in the revised versions of targets 21 and 22 of the framework.

We are currently working on the ninth issue of a newsletter geared towards highlighting work related to the Engaging Indigenous People in Climate Policy Project. This issue is the first newsletter of the current reporting period, with five additional issues to be published by March 2023. The newsletters are intended to provide updates on the project. The updates will focus on issues related to local, regional, and global actions around climate change, biodiversity, and conservation, particularly on improving awareness of these issues among Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people.



Planning for the second annual national survey has also begun. This survey, which will build on the previous survey, will track national trends in climate change and conservation awareness.

We are also expanding and updating the climate change and conservation toolkits to make them more accessible to Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people. The kits will guide best practices related to mitigating climate change impacts and promoting conservation and biodiversity protection.





#BeTheDrum: For Indigenous Women Entrepreneurs Across Turtle Island

Some of you may not be familiar with NWAC's Indigenous women's entrepreneur navigation program called #BeTheDrum. Those who join our program are greeted by a team of dedicated entrepreneur navigators and mentors. You also have access to relevant workshops, networking events, peer-to-peer groups, and live social media Q&A sessions.

Our weekly peer-to-peer groups are one of the most popular offerings. Here in this safe environment, you can connect with Indigenous women entrepreneurs. It's a space where like-minded women can form an online community with entrepreneurs from all over Canada. We gather every Tuesday at 1:00 p.m. EST to discuss our goals, accomplishments, ideas, hardships, and victories. Learn about the sign-up process and our team.



#BeTheDrum: For Indigenous Women Entrepreneurs Across Turtle Island- CONT.

During the fall months, #BeTheDrum hosts several skill-building workshops in partnership with successful Indigenous women entrepreneurs. Topics range from the fashion industry, to culinary entrepreneurship, to owning and operating a small business. We host 10 workshops a year, along with an annual business networking event. This year's networking event, on October 27, 2022, is exclusive to #BeTheDrum members.

Today, #BeTheDrum is an essential service for Indigenous women entrepreneurs across Turtle Island. To date, a total of 272 entrepreneurs have enrolled in our navigational program and more than 200 Indigenous women-owned businesses are listed on our business directory.







NWAC Communications:

Gearing up for Truth and Reconciliation Day and the Sisters in Spirit Vigil

Much of NWAC's media outreach throughout September and October was dedicated to healing and reconciliation as we geared up for the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30 (available in French) and our Sisters in Spirit vigil on October 4 (available in French).

We also published issue #14 of Kci-Niwesq on Truth and Reconciliation Day, held on September 30. In this edition, we explore what healing means to residential school survivors, how to provide healing through art, what land reconciliation has to do with healing, and how physical activity nourishes healing. We also highlight NWAC's healing centres, the Chelsea Resiliency Lodge and Wabanaki Resiliency Lodge.



Aside from that, NWAC President Carol McBride released a parallel statement demanding to end the violence against Indigenous women, girls, transgender, and gender-diverse people, so they can "walk, without fear, down any street in these lands" (available in French). In a second statement, President McBride stated that "reconciliation has been a long time in coming and now is the time for action" (available in French).



NWAC Communications - CONT

NWAC also **issued a statement** when the federal Justice Department "closed the door on Canada's largest national Indigenous women's organization" and did not allow NWAC to join integral meetings with provincial and territorial ministers. President McBride also called for "co-creation of an **Indigenous-led training** program" to address racism in health care services in Quebec (available in **French**).

In late September, NWAC announced a partnership with the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Trust for Americas to bring in a **first-In-Canada digital skills program**. This program represents a significant step toward achieving Indigenous economic resiliency and reconciliation (available in **French**). Social Media Reach



Throughout the months of September and October, all of our social media accounts showed great growth and were hugely successful. On Facebook alone, NWAC reached 1.1 million users between September 1 and October 14.

One major media campaign during this time was the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, on September 30. For this day we coined the hashtag #RememberHonourAct, which was a key element in our three-week campaign leading up to this date. Each week we broke down the hashtag by theme: week one was "remember;" week two was "honour;" and week three was "act" (or action toward reconciliation).

We hosted an all-day event at the Social, Cultural, and Economic Innovation Centre—NWAC's main office and headquarters—which included storytelling, cultural teachings, crafting, and Facebook Live events. Our Truth and Reconciliation campaign was extremely successful, yielding a reach of more than 378,000 views across Facebook and Instagram.

Another major campaign was our Sisters in Spirit vigil, held on October 4. We ran media campaigns across all social platforms leading up to the event and hosted Facebook Lives during the walk and vigil. NWAC's Sisters in Spirit campaign yielded 53,500 interactions on Facebook and Instagram.

Be sure to follow us on socials to stay up to date on all of NWAC's happenings and initiatives! Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and LinkTree, and be sure to subscribe to our magazine, Kci-Niwesq.





#RememberHonourAct

TRUTH & RECONCILIATION: #REMEMBERHONOURACT

NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 30TH

































