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THE GREAT SPIRIT OF THE FEMALE SIDE OF LIFE OF ALL THINGS

# KCI-NIWESQ

**NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA MAGAZINE**

ISSUE 13.



CAROL MCBRIDE **NWAC'S NEW PRESIDENT**

FROM BLOOD MEMORY

**THE ART OF JUSTIEN SENOA WOOD**

FEEDING COMMUNITIES **ONE BANNOCK RECIPE AT A TIME**

NWAC's **SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND ECONOMIC INNOVATION CENTRE**











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LYNNE GROULX

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## WELCOME TO THE THIRTEENTH EDITION OF KCI-NIWESQ, THE MAGAZINE OF THE NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA.

This issue may seem a little indulgent because we take a look at one of our own achievements, the new Social, Cultural, and Economic Innovation Centre in downtown Gatineau, Quebec, which we opened to the public in June of this year.

I will begin with a small story about the origins of Kci-Niwesq. The idea for it came to us during a conversation NWAC had two years ago with a federal government official who said we were not doing enough to publicize ourselves. She said we needed a way to help Canadians understand the work this organization is doing on behalf of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people, and suggested a magazine. So, here we are.

Kci-Niwesq, for the most part, has featured stories about Indigenous women, and not this organization specifically.

But the new Centre we have built, on the foundation of what used to be a bank and next to the towers that hold the offices of the federal departments is truly breathtaking. It is a testament to the beauty, the resilience, and the potential of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people.

In this issue we will tell you about the art gallery—housed within our building that is itself an art gallery—we have created. We talk to Irene Goodwin, the curator of NWAC's art collections, about the task of showing this art (most of which is for sale) to its best advantage, and of the power of art to move us spiritually and emotionally.

You will hear from Métis Chef Jenni Lessard about the rise to prominence of Indigenous food and the interest it is creating among gourmands across the

country. Café Bouleau, on the Innovation Centre's ground floor, is now selling Indigenous-inspired treats.

We talk to Justien Senoa Wood, one of the artisans whose work will be featured in Artisanelle Boutique, which sells the creations of Indigenous artists from across the country and, indeed, the Americas. She tells us that she is so fortunate to be able to make a living from something she loves to do.

Shannin Metatawabin, Chief Executive Officer of the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Associations (NACCA), tells us that many Indigenous lives would improve if governments invested in social financing, like the social-financing work that NWAC is doing out of our new Centre in Gatineau.

I take some time to explain the need for long-term stable funding for national Indigenous organizations, and how the Social, Cultural, and Economic Innovation Centre will help us with that.

And we will introduce you to our wonderful new President, Carol McBride. We are unbelievably excited to have a woman of her experience and character leading this organization.

So, thank you once again for opening the pages that follow. Thank you for reading the thirteenth edition of Kci-Niwesq. Please drop us a line and let us know what you think at [reception@nwac.ca](mailto:reception@nwac.ca).

MIIGWETCH.





**FROM BAND-AID TO BEDROCK SOLUTIONS:**

## **NWAC'S JOURNEY TO FINANCIAL STABILITY AND SECURITY**

NWAC's new Social, Cultural, and Economic Innovation Centre is more than a stunningly beautiful place for the organization to call home. It is a bedrock of its financial stability and security.

Lynne Groulx, NWAC's chief executive officer, says national Indigenous organizations like NWAC should not have to live hand to mouth and from one government grant or donation to the next.

"The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls stated quite clearly that there is a need for governments to provide long-term and stable funding for organizations that are doing the work of addressing the many issues that reduce the quality of life of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people," says Ms. Groulx.

Governments, perhaps because they are short-lived entities themselves, like to invest in the short term. That creates problems for national Indigenous organizations that are tackling very long-term issues.

"Historically, since the beginning of our organization, we have had severe funding gaps," says Ms. Groulx. "With governments changing from Liberal to Conservative and back again—whatever the government of the day might be—and the different priorities that they have, they cut programming, they adjust programming, they start pilot programs, then they stop them."

That creates huge operational difficulties for national Indigenous organizations and the people they serve, she says.

**"WE KNOW THAT THE SHORT-TERM BAND-AID SOLUTIONS DEFINITELY DON'T WORK WELL FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND, IN PARTICULAR, FOR US AT NWAC BECAUSE THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS ARE SO SIGNIFICANT," SAYS MS. GROULX. "WE'RE TALKING ABOUT A GENOCIDE. WE'RE TALKING ABOUT PROBLEMS OF POVERTY AND DISCRIMINATION, SEXISM IN THE INDIAN ACT, AND STRUCTURAL AND INSTITUTIONAL PROBLEMS. HOW COULD YOU POSSIBLY USE SHORT-TERM FUNDING TO ADDRESS SUCH SIGNIFICANT ISSUES?"**

NWAC recognized it needs a stable source of funds to pay for the work of serving Indigenous women and gender-diverse people without interruption. The new Social, Cultural, and Economic Innovation Centre is a big part of that, says Ms. Groulx.

Payments for the rental of Indigenous-themed conference rooms and the revenues incurred from the Artisanelle Boutique and Café Bouleau will provide much needed predictable and reliable funding. NWAC estimates the revenue generated will quickly cover some the building's operating costs, and on programming for the people we represent.





In addition, NWAC is reaching out to corporate sponsors and other donors for social investment. The banks, for instance, have been very accommodating to NWAC, a non-profit organization, says Ms. Groulx.

"Having revenue generation and funding streams beyond government means that we'll have a cushion," says Ms. Groulx. "If the government does not want to renew a program that we feel is critical, then we will have some of our own funds to be able to continue that program."

A good example, she says, is the money that was offered to national Indigenous organizations to help Indigenous people cope with social issues stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. NWAC created online crafting workshops to help reduce the isolation, but these workshops are also giving Indigenous women the skills they need to start their own business as artisans.

"When the COVID crisis ended, so did the funding for that program," says Ms. Groulx. "Well, it's a critical program. We put more than 12,000 women through it and there is a huge ongoing demand for the program. And it's giving a benefit to those who are taking it."

So we have continued to pay for it with donations and through work that we're doing with different companies. That revenue generation is making sure that we are filling those gaps."

The provision of long-term stable funding to national Indigenous organizations like NWAC is a part of reconciliation, she says. Indigenous Peoples have lived in unstable circumstances since colonization, being placed under the Indian Act, and being forced on to small territories. Without stable funding, Indigenous organizations cannot provide healing from the traumas inflicted by those policies.

"As the Elders have said to me repeatedly, you can't just open someone up and then send them home," says Ms. Groulx. "The issues faced by Indigenous Peoples are long-term and must be allowed to take the time that they need to be resolved. That's true for the economy. That's true for healing. And that's true for reconciliation."

**"WE REALLY NEED TO SHARE THOSE BITS AND PIECES THAT WERE LESSONS AND BECAME STEPPING STONES IN THE PURSUIT OF OUR DREAMS AND OUR CAREERS. AND THAT'S REALLY THE PURPOSE OF THE ARCTIC ROSE ROOM—IT'S TO KEEP DREAMS ALIVE, TO KEEP THAT HOPE ALIVE."**

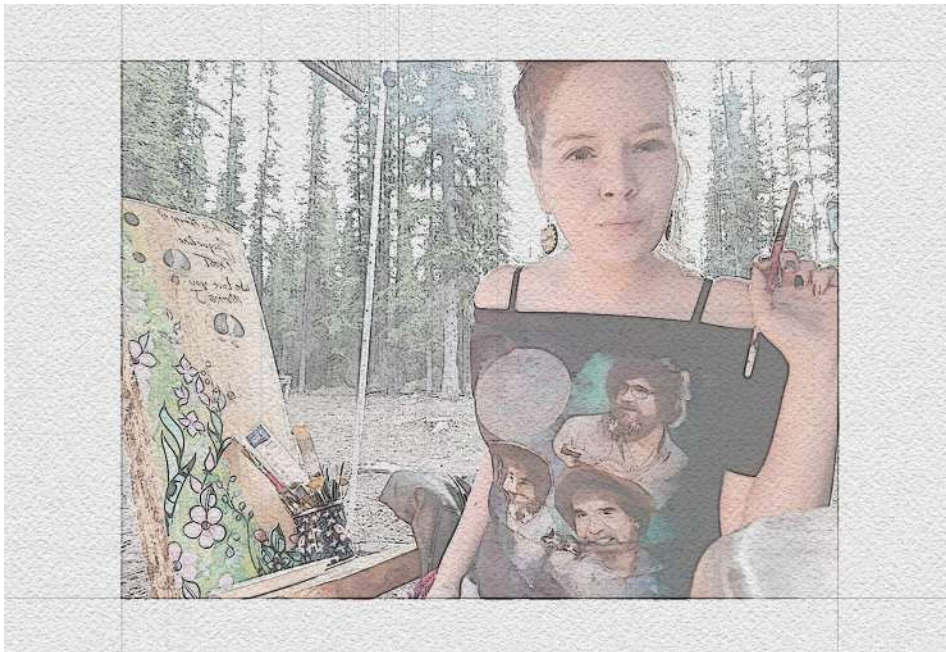
**- LYNNE GROULX**



# FROM BLOOD MEMORY

## THE ART OF JUSTIEN SENOA

*featured at Artisanelle Boutique*



JUSTIEN SENOA WOOD SAYS HER ARTISTIC TALENTS ARE THE GIFTS OF HER TUTCHONE AND DENE ANCESTORS.

Justien, from Na-Cho Nyak Dun First Nation in Yukon, works in a variety of media. She carves, she paints, and she beads.

Justien's tee-shirts feature her blood moon lunar eclipse design that she created to honour and bring healing to residential

school survivors and all of the children who died in residential schools across Canada. Justien's Every Child Matters tee-shirts will be sold in NWAC's Artisanelle Boutique, housed in the new Social, Cultural, and Economic Innovation Centre in downtown Gatineau, Quebec, from our online store, and at Unorthodox in the Yukon.

**"MY ART IS VERY MUCH A PART OF WHO I AM, AND MY BEING," SAYS JUSTIEN. "IT IS FROM BLOOD MEMORY, UNIVERSAL DOWNLOADS FROM MY ANCESTORS. IT'S FROM SOMETHING SO MUCH DEEPER THAN JUST ME."**

Her handle on Instagram, where many of her pieces can be seen, is [senoa\\_studio](#). "Senoa is my middle name. In Dene, it means My Little Auntie."

Justien, who is 36, says she was artistic as a child. She says her mother and grandmother supported her creativity from a young age, which allowed her to express herself through art.

Then, in 2007, she spent two years in the Sundog Carving Program, which gave young carvers in Yukon a chance to learn







Pictured: *Bluebell Spirit* by Justien Senoa Weood

from masters of the craft. “That’s when I started to take art seriously as a career, not just as a passion,” says Justien.

Justien’s art, which is full of uplifting imagery like butterflies and flowers, is heavily steeped in her cultural heritage.

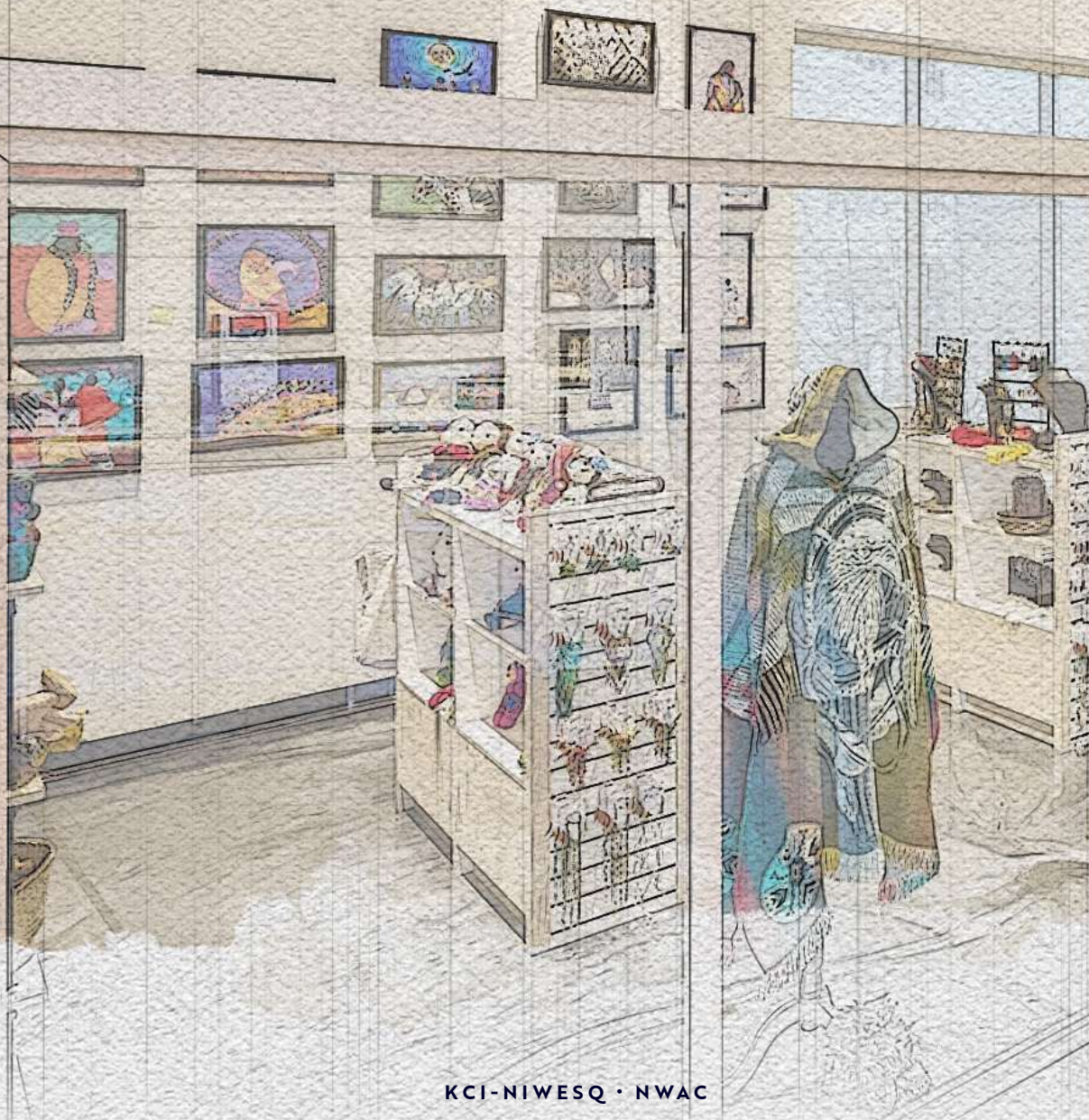
“I’m inspired by a lot of things,” she says. “I’m really inspired by nature. It’s really beautiful in Yukon. We’re surrounded by a lot of untouched, beautiful land. And I’m inspired by my family, most of all my son. I have a little boy on the autism spectrum, and he inspires everything I do.”

Her son, Eli, is now 11 years old.

“I’m able to stay home with him and do what I love,” says Justien. “I feel very fortunate to be able to make a living off something that I love doing while being able to raise my son and ensure that he gets the proper autism therapies that he needs. So, that’s the best part—staying home with my son and doing what I love.”



# Artisanelle







## ARTISANELLE BOUTIQUE

Artisanelle Boutique, which is located on the main floor of the new Centre, sells many printed pieces from Indigenous artisans who have been able to scale up their production. But it also sells handcrafted originals.

The shelves and racks are full of brightly coloured wares, including artwork, dolls, clothing, accessories, jewellery, soaps, house wares, and many other beautiful items. Ribbon skirts have been especially popular purchases since the store opened its doors in June of this year.

NWAC is also preparing to open an online store that will sell all of the merchandise in the boutique, and more. The aim is to create a venue where Indigenous women can sell their art and their crafts. The revenue flows back to them, building the economic independence that the commissioners of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls said was critical.

Most of inventory is from Canada, with work by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit artists. But some is from far south of the border and has been created by Indigenous women in Mexico, Peru, Guatemala, Colombia, and Costa Rica, with other countries being added to the list.

NWAC hopes to obtain procurement contracts with the government to make it easy for departments to buy crafts made by Indigenous women that can be presented as official gifts of Canada.

Lynne Groulx, CEO, hopes to have the Social, Cultural, and Economic Innovation Centre put on the itinerary of tour companies in the National Capital Region. "We're going to actively seek out that tourism business," she says, "which has that beautiful reconciliation component to it, where people are learning about all these beautiful artists and the beautiful things that Indigenous women are making."

There will be opportunities for NWAC to co-operate with representatives of countries to showcase the work of Indigenous women from an international perspective.

Guisela Godinez, Guatemala's ambassador to Canada, says this sort of co-operation "is the beginning of a long-term effort to address the most important development challenges, based on the idea that women not only improve their livelihoods when they become empowered, but that this has a positive impact in their families, communities, and the country."



**"SHOWCASING THE WORK OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN IS THE BEGINNING OF A LONG-TERM EFFORT TO ADDRESS THE MOST IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES, BASED ON THE IDEA THAT WOMEN NOT ONLY IMPROVE THEIR LIVELIHOODS WHEN THEY BECOME EMPOWERED, BUT THAT THIS HAS A POSITIVE IMPACT IN THEIR FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES, AND THE COUNTRY. //**

- GUISELA GODINEZ



Social, Cultural, and Economic  
Innovation Centre

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# OPENING NIGHT

































# THE INDIGENOUS CULINARY WAY

*The joy of feeding communities  
one bannock recipe at a time*







## CAFÉ BOULEAU

INTEREST IN INDIGENOUS CUISINE HAS INTENSIFIED ACROSS CANADA OVER THE PAST DECADE AND MÉTIS CHEF JENNI LESSARD SAYS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS TAKEN IT TO ANOTHER LEVEL.

Chef Lessard is among a growing number of prominent Indigenous culinary experts who are sharing the food of their communities with the rest of the world. She owns Inspired by Nature Culinary Consulting, located in Treaty Four territory in Saskatchewan, through which she develops recipes and menus and teaches her craft to other aspiring chefs.

She is also the Indigenous culinary consultant for Wanuskewin Heritage Park in Saskatoon. And, this fall, Chef Lessard will be the Chef in Residence at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa.

Indigenous food is as varied as the cultures of Indigenous Peoples. Even bannock, says Chef Lessard, can be made in an infinite variety of ways, and recipes vary from community to community.

For example, she took bullet (meatball) soup to Waterhen Lake First Nation in Northern Saskatchewan, where she is training a culinary team at an Eco Lodge purchased by the community.

"I served the soup to everybody," says Chef Lessard. "And they said, 'No, our bullet soup is like this.' And they showed me a completely different way of making it. And I said, 'Oh, that's what my grandma used to make for us, but she called it Irish stew to mask the fact that it was Indigenous cuisine.'"

On the other hand, there are some commonalities to all Indigenous dishes. They require locally sourced land-based ingredients—plants and berries and animals.

"That's pretty obvious," says Chef Lessard. "But I think it's almost more of the approach to cooking. It's a way to feed people, not so much a way for the cook to show ego. You've been given



A watercolor illustration of a cafe interior. In the foreground, there are two large potted plants with green foliage. Behind them, a small table holds a music stand with sheet music. On the wall, there is a framed picture of a colorful, abstract figure. To the right, a long counter with white cabinets and a wooden top is visible. Behind the counter, there are various kitchen appliances, including a toaster, a coffee machine, and a small oven. A row of white bar stools with wooden seats is lined up in front of the counter. The background features a wall with two circular windows and a hanging lamp on the left. The overall style is soft and artistic, with a mix of muted and vibrant colors.

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**THE PANDEMIC MADE PEOPLE  
REALLY THINK ABOUT THEIR FOOD  
ROOTS AND FOOD TRADITIONS ...  
TO RETHINK THEIR RELATIONSHIP  
WITH FOOD AND ALSO TO TAKE  
TIME TO LEARN ABOUT OTHER  
CULTURES AND CUISINES."**

**- JENNI LESSARD**





an honourable task in feeding communities. There are cooks and chefs who make their way onto the national news. And then there are those cooks who are cooking every day in their communities for daycares, for Elders in long term care, for community feasts and events. Their names and their faces will never be published in relation to indigenous cuisine. But that is the true cuisine.”

NWAC is helping to bring the Indigenous food experience to the National Capital Region with the opening of Café Bouleau on the main floor of its new Social, Cultural, and Economic Innovation Centre in downtown Gatineau, Quebec. The café, which is equipped with a full chef’s kitchen and a culinary instruction classroom a floor below, is offering treats that have been Inspired by Indigenous tradition.

Chef Lessard was raised in Northern Saskatchewan surrounded by people who lived the traditional lifestyle and ate foods that have been staples in the area for hundreds and hundreds of years. She recalls being served fried bannock at the native friendship centre when she would go there for lunch.

She started cooking professionally at the age of 14 when she opened a burger truck at a local airport, and then went on to own her own restaurant and catering business. She says she has watched interest in Indigenous cuisine bloom over the past 20 years.

She is hoping to tap into that interest in Ottawa when she is Chef in Residence at the National Arts Centre. Her menus, which have already been drafted, incorporate what her restaurant and catering customers have come to call “Jenni food,” which is local prairie food with a twist—like her lentil, wild rice, and barley bake with a Saskatoon berry aoli.

She would also like to bring some of her apprentices to Ottawa so they can see Indigenous food consumed and appreciated on a national level, and she is looking for funding to make that happen.

“If I, as a young 14-year-old kid who opened a burger stand at the airport, had had an opportunity to go to a national agency to see what people are interested in, I probably would have steered my cuisine in a different way and not zigzagged so much,” she says.

The trend of preparing food that is locally sourced really took off in the 2000s, says Chef Lessard.

And that has a lot of cross-over with Indigenous cuisine. But, from a consumer and media level, the interest in the traditional food of the First Nations and Métis really began about 2012, she says.

“I had bannock on my menu when I first opened my restaurant in 2005. And I would tell customers, ‘This is my great aunt’s recipe. She learned it from her mom and I tweaked it this way.’ And nobody really seemed to care. They loved it. They liked eating it.” But the back story was unimportant, says Chef Lessard. “Now I’m doing workshops on that bannock—the same recipe. So it has really changed.”

The pandemic has given that interest momentum. Many of the members of the Indigenous Culinary of Associated Nations, of which Chef Lessard is a director, have shared the experience of having more time to talk about their food, and more willing ears to listen, since the start of COVID-19, she says.

“It made people really think about their food roots and food traditions and made them ask, ‘Why am I making and buying and growing and eating the food that I serve?’” says Chef Lessard. “We had a little bit of a pause to think about that. And then a lot of chefs, instead of serving our products en masse every day, were able to serve it in a different way behind the camera to people who had time to listen. So, I really do think that the pandemic was a little bit of a pause for people to rethink their relationship with food and also to take time to learn about other cultures and cuisines.”





# A CONVERSATION WITH CAROL MCBRIDE, NWAC'S NEW PRESIDENT

## TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR POLITICAL BACKGROUND.

I started at a very young age, in 1973, when I was 18 and we took over the Indian Affairs building. It was a peaceful demonstration. I think that's where my political life really began. The youth got together on Cornwall Island (in the St. Lawrence River) and we then went to Ottawa and we took over Indian Affairs. It was a 24-hour sit-in.

I got married when I was 21 and kind of settled down for a little bit.

Then, when my daughter was three, I got a job putting together a book called *A Few Memories*. It was pictures of the community.

I was then a member of the Temiskaming First Nation council for six years before I decided to run for Chief. I was Chief for 13 years. I was also Grand Chief of the Algonquin Secretariat.

From there I left politics and I started to work for our First Nation.

In 2005, I met the executive director for the Indigenous women's group in Ontario, called *Keepers of the Circle*. I worked there for a while. Then I went back home and worked as a family support worker. I became health director for the First Nation. Then I went back to the women's group. And here I am.

## WHY DID YOU WANT TO BE PRESIDENT OF NWAC?

I feel like I have the expertise and the knowledge of the grassroots issues, and I think I know where I would like to head and where I would like to help.

I asked one of my friends, after I was approached to run for president of NWAC, if I should run. And, he said, Carol, if you feel that you have something to give yet, you have the responsibility to do that. So, I feel that I still have some energy to be able to help.

## WHAT IS GOING TO BE YOUR BIGGEST FOCUS AS NWAC PRESIDENT, AND WHY?

I WANT TO MAKE THINGS BETTER AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL. WE HAVE TO FIND A WAY TO ADDRESS SOME OF THE BIG ISSUES THAT ARE KILLING OUR YOUTH, OUR FUTURE GENERATIONS. I DO BELIEVE THAT WE CAN HELP OUR PEOPLE DEAL WITH THE TRAUMAS THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED.

We need to get healing lodges. We need to get help with the addictions that are putting our young people at risk. A lot of our young people are dying. That's where I feel that I really want to make a mark.

There's so much healing that has to be done. A lot of the parents who are bringing up children nowadays have never dealt with problems like these. A lot of these problems were brought on by the government. So that's what I'm going to be fighting for—to get help for our people.

My goal is very simple. I want to make life better for our people.

## HOW IMPORTANT IS THE ISSUE OF THE MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS AND HOW WILL YOU TACKLE THAT?



Pictured Carol McBride





I think the government needs to be held with its feet to the fire on this. We need help. It has a duty to provide that help. I'm going to get it.

Our grieving families, our grieving mothers, our grieving grandmothers, they want to know what happened to their children and their grandchildren.

And it is still continuing. I'm scared for my granddaughter to go to a shopping mall now. I make sure that someone is with her. And I do the same for my grandsons. We have got to find some answers here so that we can deal with it.

**HOW IMPORTANT IS IT FOR NWAC TO ADD SERVICE DELIVERY, INCLUDING DIRECT HEALING AND COUNSELLING SERVICES, TO ITS MANDATE AND TO BUILD MORE RESILIENCY LODGES?**

Oh my goodness, that's the basis of being a healthy nation.

There's so much healing that has to be done. I can't even think of how many Indigenous people have been affected throughout Canada by the traumas that have been inflicted upon us.

We need more of these resiliency lodges in order to be able to help with the healing that has to take place. That will make our families a lot healthier.

There won't be so many addictions every place, every day, that are taking away our people.

I was sitting with a person just yesterday who said there was another suicide in her community. Why is that happening? It's because we don't have enough resources for that healing to happen.

The government has to invest in that. Imagine all the traumas that we've gone through. Our people deserve that healing.

How do you feel about the fact that NWC has been left out of some of the major negotiating tables between the government and other national Indigenous organizations?

We represent women, and women are the heart of our families. I'm lost for words here because I feel so passionate about what we can offer to those people at negotiations.

We're the heartbeat of our people. It's the women who bring the light. And we just have so much that we could bring to the table.



**WE REPRESENT WOMEN, AND WOMEN ARE THE HEARTBEAT OF OUR PEOPLE. IT'S THE WOMEN WHO BRING THE LIGHT. AND WE JUST HAVE SO MUCH THAT WE COULD BRING TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE. //**

- CAROL MCBRIDE



# SOCIAL FINANCING

## LIFTS INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES OUT OF POVERTY

Investors across Canada are turning to social financing to help Indigenous entrepreneurs develop their businesses and create the economic independence that can lift entire communities out of poverty.

One of the organizations at the heart of the social financing movement is the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Associations (NACCA). This network of over 50 Indigenous financial institutions is dedicated to stimulating economic growth for Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

Shannin Metatawabin, NACCA's Chief Executive Officer, says many Indigenous lives would improve if governments made significant investments in social financing along with the money spent on Indigenous social programs like health care, infrastructure, and housing.

"In the Indigenous community, for every loan we've measured, there's a 72 per cent increase in life satisfaction from starting a business for that individual," Mr. Metatawabin said in a recent interview. Mental health indicators improve by 52 per cent and health indicators improve by 20 per cent, he said.

For that reason, said Mr. Metatawabin, governments that focus on economic development and helping Indigenous people start a business will be saving money in the long run.

Social financing also allows private investors to gain a sense of satisfaction from their investment dollars.

"It's a new market in which to invest," said Mr. Metatawabin. "The millennials are going to be transferred over \$4 trillion over the next 25 years from the baby boomers. Baby boomers all want return. But the millennials, they have a different lens through which

**NWAC'S "SOCIAL INNOVATION INITIATIVE GOES FURTHER THAN JUST A FINANCIAL TRANSACTION. IT INVOLVES THAT RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ENTREPRENEUR TO REALLY PROMOTE THEIR PRODUCT AND HELP BUILD THEIR BUSINESS AND THEIR NETWORK, POSSIBLY THROUGHOUT CANADA AND EVEN THROUGHOUT THE WORLD."**

they're looking at their money. They're going to get this money from their parents or their grandparents, and they want a return, yes. But, more important to them is they want to change the world, they want to see a social impact."

Canadians hear constantly about Indigenous poverty, boil-water advisories, lost opportunities, and lost hope, he said. Investors can help tackle those problems

by directing some of their money to initiatives that create Indigenous economic opportunity.

"It's important because we have been barred from participating in the Canadian economy and the global economy," said Mr. Metatawabin. "The mainstream is just now getting a sense of all the injustice that's perpetuated on our community. Anytime we tried to participate, the Government of Canada has instituted new legislation to remove our equitable access to participation."

A good example of that is farming, he said.

When Indigenous people tried to establish farms 200 years ago, the non-Indigenous population convinced the federal government to make it illegal for Indigenous farmers to own the machinery that would



NWAC's Social, Cultural, and Economic Innovation Centre



allow them to compete equitably, said Mr. Metatawabin. "And then they instituted laws that split up the Indigenous farmers' land so they had to share it with other First Nations members who, in turn, sold it off. So then you had a Swiss cheese of a Nation and there's no more farms."

The Indian Act has been another barrier, he said. That legislation prohibits reserve land from being used as security on a loan, which bars Indigenous entrepreneurs from getting access to capital.

To break down those types of barriers, NACCA has brought \$500 million of new programs and services over the past five years that are dedicated to spurring Indigenous entrepreneurship. And it has launched an Indigenous women's program, which offers micro lending, business support services, and some financing so Indigenous women can consider entrepreneurship as an option for family income.

"It's an opportunity," said Mr. Metatawabin. "It's a new form of investment with different criteria. There's \$35 trillion globally in social finance and what we're trying to do is identify our specific market segment and particularly women. That would be a great social impact for these investors, who will receive a return as well as a social impact in the community that they're providing an investment to."

NWAC is also engaged with Indigenous entrepreneurs through programs run out of its new Social, Cultural, and Economic Innovation Centre in Gatineau, Quebec.

NWAC supports Indigenous entrepreneurs from the micro business to those who have managed to significantly grow their operations, says Lynne Groulx, the association's Chief Executive Officer.

That means more than simply having a store where Indigenous women can sell their wares, says Ms. Groulx. It means really understanding how they make their products and how NWAC can help them to find a market to grow their business.

For Instance, she says, if there is an entrepreneur who has a good product but

cannot afford the materials to make 50 or 100 units to get it into the retail market, NWAC will advance some of the funds required.

"So the social innovation initiative goes further than just a financial transaction," she said. "It involves that relationship with the entrepreneur to really promote their product and help build their business and their network, possibly throughout Canada and even throughout the world."

NWAC is also engaging with partners like the Government of Canada and investors like the Bank of Montreal that want to put their money into programs to help empower Indigenous women entrepreneurs.

"The return is the social good and the social impact," Ms. Groulx says. "They're not interested in a simple donation program. They're investing in the social aspects of the program."



Pictured: Shannin Metatawabin







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## KCI-NIWESQ

is a monthly magazine of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC). Its objective is to highlight the work of the organization and to tell the stories of the Indigenous women of Canada.

NWAC, which was founded in 1974, is a national Indigenous organization representing First Nations (on and off reserve, with status and without), Métis, and Inuit women, girls, and gender-diverse people in Canada. Its goal is to enhance, promote, and foster the social, economic, cultural, and political well-being of Indigenous women within their respective communities and Canadian society.

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