

NWAC President's Report

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

LORRAINE WHITMAN

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



My Dear Friends,

The spring months are finally here and with it many new events! This month I had a chance to meet via a virtual tea with the Governor General Mary Simon. The theme of her tea talk was *ajuinnaata*: never giving up. Her Excellency spoke about her role and priorities, and about how we can work together to effect meaningful change. It was a wonderful time to be able to speak with her Excellency once again and, as always, a pleasure!

I recently held an interview on a subject that is near and dear to me: smudging. Smudging is not just purification. To Indigenous Peoples, it is a sacred tradition that has great cultural significance. It is not to be done on a whim. It must be done with reverence.

With the rise of new-age spirituality, a lot of non-Indigenous people are interested in performing smudging rituals with plant medicines like white sage, sweetgrass, cedar, and tobacco to purify their homes and for other cleansing purposes.

But many stores selling these medicines are not Indigenous-owned, their products are not Indigenous-sourced, and often plants like white sage are unsustainably harvested and illegally poached. White sage has been over-harvested in the wild.

To avoid buying sage, or medicines of any sort, that have been unethically or unsustainably harvested, I recommended that non-Indigenous people purchase them from a First Nations person or supplier who states that they adhere to sustainable principles.

Some Indigenous people also call the sale of these products by non-Indigenous people as cultural appropriation. And I can understand their concerns. There are far too many examples of non-Indigenous people inappropriately and disrespectfully using Indigenous cultural symbols.

But I tend to agree with some of my First Nations sisters who sell sustainably sourced sage and sweetgrass who say the Creator celebrates the world's diversity. All people should enjoy the benefits of powerful sacred medicines if they are used respectfully and appropriately, and with a full understanding of the traditions behind them.

In a recent interview, I spoke of the inquiry into the death of Heather Winterstein, 24. Heather went alone to the emergency department at St. Catharines General Hospital in Ontario in December 2019 for a severe backache. Earlier that week, she had fallen down some stairs. She was sent home with Tylenol but returned to hospital the next day, only to die shortly after. Family members say they were told by the local public health unit that she had died from a Strep A blood infection.

Heather's mother is from the Six Nations reserve. It is unclear whether staff at the hospital knew about Heather's Indigenous heritage.

Today, the family has many questions surrounding her death on December 10, including whether she received the right care, and whether her drug use or Indigenous heritage may have played a role in her treatment in some way. The family is calling for a coroner's inquest.

Heather's story is not exceptional. During my interview, I touched on the issues that still remain within health care settings. Indigenous patients regularly experience abusive treatment, negative stereotyping, substandard care, and an overall sense of feeling unwelcome. As result, we are reluctant to seek treatment, even when we know it is necessary.

This means Indigenous Peoples as a whole have significantly worse health outcomes than non-Indigenous people. In a wealthy and progressive country like Canada this is just plain wrong.

We know that racism and negative stereotypes are directly linked to misdiagnosis, medical malpractice, and incidents of forced or coerced sterilization.

We cannot fight discrimination in health care on our own. We need the support of governments and all Canadians.

Here is a list of solutions that we have devised at NWAC for ending racism in health care. We have asked governments at all levels to:


- acknowledge the problem and make an unwavering commitment to correct it
- hold racists, and the institutions that employ them, responsible and accountable for their behaviour
- ensure that any action taken in response to discriminatory treatment is tracked and publicly reported
- create Indigenous task forces to identify policies and practices in health care that have been shaped by discrimination
- hire Indigenous navigators in health care facilities to promote culturally safe practices and ensure that Indigenous patients are protected from racism
- train and recruit Indigenous staff at all levels in health care
- provide cultural training for health care professionals
- incorporate traditional Indigenous healing methods into Western models of health care
- implement the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that relate to health

International Women's Day took place on March 8. One of the themes for 2022, "Providing Healing, Promoting Hope," is both a tribute to the ceaseless work of caregivers and frontline workers during this ongoing pandemic and a recognition of the thousands of ways that women of all cultures have provided both healing and hope throughout history.


Other important dates to remember: March 1 — Zero Discrimination Day; March 21 — Week of Solidarity with the Peoples Struggling against Racism and Racial Discrimination; March 21 — International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; March 22 — World Water Day; March 24 — International Day for the Right to the Truth concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims.—We at NWAC marked all of these days across our social media channels.

Spring is a time of renewal. It is a new season of rebirth and enlightening. Let's look towards the good in what is coming and embrace renewal. The smells of spring, trees starting to bud, the grass growing all indicate a new beginning. Empower our women or girls to hear their voices calling for a better tomorrow.

Wela'lin



President Lorraine Whitman



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

My March Agenda

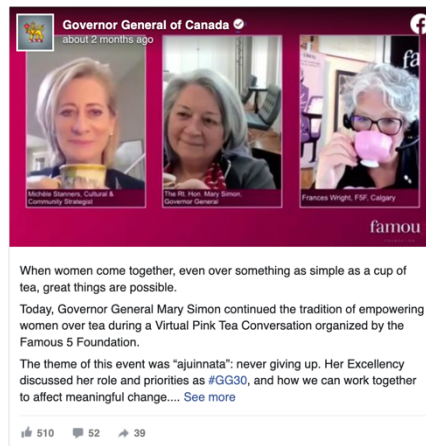
Virtual Tea with Governor General Mary Simon

Theme of her tea talk was *ajuinnaata*: never giving up. Her Excellency spoke about her role and priorities, and about how we can work together to effect meaningful change.

Virtual Pink Tea Conversation

March 4, 2022

Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary Simon, Governor General of Canada, took part in a Virtual Pink Tea Conversation on the theme of *ajuinnaata*: never giving up.



Participation in UNFC 66

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNFC 66) Held a week-long virtual event. I was pleased to see many ministers participating in this year's UNFCF. Participants in UNFCF side events included: Harjit Sajjan, Minister of International Development, who provided pre-recorded videos for three side events; Karina Gould, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development; Seamus O'Regan, Minister of Labour.

- **Women and Gender Equality Canada** hosted a virtual Canadian reception to give Canadians an opportunity to speak with Minister Ien, Ambassador Bob Rae, and Anita Vandenberg, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development. Broadcast was via the United Nations web channel.
- **Commission on the Status of Women UNCSW 66 Canada Co-Sponsored Side Event:** The focus was on empowering women and girls to advance gender equality and climate change solutions.
- **Commission on the Status of Women UNCSW 66 Canada Co-Sponsored Side Event:** The focus was on gender-based violence and the climate crisis: forging vital connections.

Turtle Island News Interview

The interview was on the inquiry into the death of Heather Winterstein.

Interview with APTN

The interview focused on the NDP lending support to the Liberal government in exchange for a slate of policy, including the following contributions for Indigenous-related items:

- making a significant additional investment in Indigenous housing in 2022 (it will be up to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities to determine how housing investments are designed and delivered)
- accelerating the implementation of the federal pathway to address missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people with Indigenous partners
- providing the necessary supports for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities who wish to continue to undertake the work of burial searches at the sites of former residential schools

National News Interview

The interview focused on the sudden deaths of 15 Indigenous people in Thunder Bay, which require further investigation by the police or coroner's office. One of the deaths was that of a two-month-old baby with cocaine in its system. In their first report, investigators in Ontario found racism in the local force. A secondary report that will not be made public recommends an external review of 25 unsolved cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls at the Thunder Bay Police Service's criminal investigation branch.

Global News Interview on Lorelie Williams in Rome and the Papal Visit

Thirty-two Métis, Inuit, and First Nations delegates brought different messages and shared their experiences to this week's meetings. Many also brought family, friends, and loved ones to support them on their journey. In all, about 180 people travelled to Rome as part of the wider Indigenous delegation. Also in the city were a half dozen Canadian bishops and a plethora of news crews. The visit was originally planned for December, but had to be rescheduled owing to health concerns related to COVID-19.

Each group — Métis, First Nations, and Inuit — had one hour with Pope Francis before meeting him as a collective body for a final hour on April 1. Within that timeframe, they communicated their expectations for the Catholic Church's role in the residential school system and for moving reconciliation forward.

Ambassador Rae Meeting

Ambassador Bob Rae met with Indigenous women's organizations in Canada. We at NWAC attended, along with Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, Women of the Métis Nation, AFN Women's Council and les Femmes Autochtones du Québec Inc.

AGA Committee Meeting

Discussions took place on the upcoming annual meeting.

Interview with U Multicultural Inc.

In this interview, I talked about NWAC and our current projects, including safe passage, opening of the Social and Economic Innovation Centre, and MMIWG issues and the Calls for Justice.

Roundtable Indigenous Mexico Webinar

Canada is committed to ending trafficking of persons at home and abroad, protecting and promoting human rights, and preserving the dignity of all people. The third roundtable focused on the detection and prevention of human trafficking within Indigenous communities in Mexico,” which UNODC Mexico implemented in collaboration with INPI and Indigenous Women Homes.

Breaking the Bias Webinar

A panel of expert changemakers discussed the intersection of gender and racial identities in our society. Dialogue focused on issues facing gender- and racially diverse people. We also shared ideas and solutions to foster more inclusive communities.

INDIGENOUS CROSSROADS CANADA-MEXICO
Roundtable II: The participation of Indigenous Women in Decision-making Processes

Host: Graeme C. Clark
Host Ambassador of Canada to Mexico

Panelists:
Hilda Anderson-Pyrz
Director, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Liaison Unit - Manitoba Remembrance Observatory Inc. (MMO) CANADA

Panelist: Francayne Joe
Partnerships Manager, National Association of Friendship Centres CANADA

Moderator: Diane Redsky
Executive Director of the Missiwi Chi Sata (Dress) Centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba CANADA

Panelist: Zenaida Pérez
Coordinator of the Indigenous Women's Program, Leadership Institute Sonora de Rescate MEXICO

Panelist: Guillermina Juárez Leyva
Founder of the Center for Studies and Community Strengthening, Maria Valeria A.C. MEXICO

Friday, December 10 10:00h (CST)
Zoom Webinar
Register online to join us
Canada

BREAKING THE BIAS A VIRTUAL CONVERSATION

PRESENTED BY MOSAIC INSTITUTE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH Ontario

Join us for a conversation on the intersection of gender & racial identities.

March 31st, 2022 | 12PM - 1:30PM (EDT)
Registration is required for this virtual event.
SIGN UP: mosaicinstitute.ca

Speakers:
Raagini Appadurai, Founder & Lead, Mosaic Institute & Consulting
Sadea Hazzar, Founder, Toronto Toronto & Co. Toronto, Ont. (South Korea)
Solana Mills, Creative Director, Mosaic Creative Agency
Jett Peters, Moderator
Ayo-Maria Pham, Founder/Chairman, Executive Partner for Diversity & Inclusion



Lorraine Whitman @LWhitma... · 18h ...

It's [#NationalPuppyDay](#) - they bring us unconditional love and affection and dogs are therapy in my opinion! They bring a different perspective; they bring us loyalty while standing by us! Happy National Puppy Day! 🐶



Lorraine Whitman @L... · 2022-03-01 ...

Today, on [#ZeroDiscriminationDay](#), celebrated globally on 1 March every year - everyone should be able to live life with dignity regardless of age, gender & ethnicity. The symbol of Zero Discrimination Day is the butterfly.

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Lorraine Whitman @L... · 2022-03-01 ...

We are all going through difficult times especially as the pandemic continues globally. We need to continue to work together in peace and in love, no matter what our diversity or background is; we have so much more in common, to offer each other. Share the love & act in kindness.

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Lorraine Whitman @L... · 2022-03-01 ...

My thoughts and my prayers go out to those in the Ukraine.

NWAC @NWAC... · 2022-03-01

"But, as women, they had a commonality."

Ukrainian and First Nations women were first brought together by scar...



Lorraine Whitman @... · 2022-03-07 ...

Let's celebrate [#WomenHistoryMonth](#) in Canada. It is a time of recognizing the women and the trailblazers for their contributions in the world today. Let's celebrate all the diversity of gender, race colour, profession of all women in Canada. 1/3

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Lorraine Whitman @... · 2022-03-07 ...

Let's empower our girls to let them know the works that our trailblazers have given us, the right to vote, to be in non-traditional working environments! 2/3



Lorraine Whitman @... · 2022-03-08 ...

[#InternationalWomensDay2022](#) : Lets recognize the women and the trailblazers for their contributions in the world today. Let's celebrate all the diversity of gender, race colour, and professions of all women in Canada. app.meltwater.com/newsletters/an...



Lorraine Whitman @... · 2022-03-28 ...
So honoured to attend this weekends concert with talented 22 yr old Mi'kmaw Morgan Toney and his band. They performed the Honour song and the Kojua song beautifully. Much of his inspiration has come from Elders, specifically his mother! [#indigenous](#) [#indigenousartist](#)



Lorraine Whitman @L... · 2022-03-14 ...
I am looking forward to attending the virtual @UN Climate Change- Environment Disaster Risk Reduction, [#GenderEqaulity](#) at the centre of solutions this week. There is much work to be done.



Women and Gen... · 2022-03-14

Minister Ien is attending the opening session of [#CSW66](#) in the United Nations General Assembly Hall with other representatives. @UN_CSW





Native Women's
Association of Canada



L'Association des
femmes autochtones
du Canada

nwac.ca