

NWAC President's Report

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

LORRAINE WHITMAN

Lorraine Whitman was elected as 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,

This month on Aboriginal Veterans Day and Remembrance Day, we honour those who have made sacrifices for us. At a Remembrance Day event in my community, I had an opportunity to speak about what this day means for me personally and for all generations. This is what I had to say:

We as Mi'kmaq, who are in Nova Scotia, have no borders. When I speak of Turtle Island, I speak of the United States and Canada, and when I speak of Indigenous, I speak of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people alike.

This is due to the Jay Treaty in 1794 that had been signed between Great Britain and the U.S. to allow the Mi'kmaq Canadian-born to travel freely back and forth between the borders. There was and is no boundary. Because of this, Americans would come out and recruit for the Indigenous men and women to join their military forces. My Uncle Freeman was one of them. He was a paratrooper for the U.S. military. My father enlisted, as did my Uncle Henry, and both chose to remain in Canada.

Thousands of Indigenous people also volunteered with the Canadian military. They were known as excellent snipers and for their marksmanship. They were also well known as code-talkers and code-runners. Because of their multiple languages, the Germans were unable to break their codes. They were able to run to the front, see where the enemy lay, and send a code back to their own men to let them know the position of their enemy.

The Indigenous soldiers were often put as scouts on the front lines first. As they were not as fair-skinned as some of their counterparts, it was easier for them to maneuver in the night.

Many of our Indigenous men and women were unfamiliar with the French and English languages, yet they enlisted.

The following essay "Spiritual Journey" is about an Indigenous man enlisting and leaving his family:

"I left home today, saying goodbye to my family. And not knowing when I shall return. It has taken me 9 hours of walking to get here. My feet are sore as I have holes in my shoes and my long hair is wet from the rain and the weather, walking to enlist. I have decided to join the army and help fight against the enemies in a war said to end all wars. My English is not good but I understand what is being said. I signed the papers and placed an X by my name. I am given new clothes and told to shower and my long, beautiful braid is cut. This leaving a pit in my stomach as my hair is part of my identity as a Mi'kmaq. I prepare for a journey to a new land; a place where the death is everywhere, the stalemate is endless, the mud and rats are unreal, the year? 1915.

We, as Indigenous people must always remember the role that our people contributed in such wars as World War I, World War II, and the Korean War as well as being deployed in our military today.

Even in times of war, Indigenous Peoples found ways to maintain their heritage, by doing that which comes naturally. Although these men left the safety of home to conform to a new way of life, they did not abandon their Indigenous ways. Some even wore traditional leathers into the battlefield. I know such a story, because in my home hangs a leather jacket belonging to a Mi'kmaw soldier in World War I. He was allowed to wear his jacket, but he had to replace his traditional buttons with the brass regiment buttons of the Canadian regiment he belonged to. Although he died in battle, he was able to maintain his heritage to the very end.

Why is it important for us to know this? Even in times of war, where one had to leave home, learn a new language, and be placed in a hostile situation, the Indigenous still were able to maintain their Indigenous identity. How can we let our heritage and language slip away, when even a soldier of her Majesty's army wanted to be known as an Indigenous first and foremost? Had we lost our freedom, the right to self-expression and possibly to our heritage.

In times of peace, let us learn from our Elders about their sacrifices and achievements, and connect with our past! We must not only remember our Indigenous soldiers for giving us the gift of peace and freedom, but also for showing us that being Indigenous is truly a great gift. We must protect our heritage and apply it in all life situations. We must remember these famous words "Lest We Forget"; we mustn't forget our soldiers or where we have come from."


As I acknowledge the 100-year-old Remembrance Day poppy, I also would like to say that we need to always reflect on the purpose and mission for which our men and women went to war; for our freedom to unify, to vote, and to keep peace in our country. For our veterans, let's show respect when we put on the poppy. It is to be worn on the left side over the heart, with the red representing the blood of those who gave their lives and the black representing mourning for those who did not return home. At one time, the green leaf signified prosperity, an ideal for which the men and women fought. The leaf was positioned towards the clock's hand of the 11, signifying the 11th day, 11th month, and 11th hour.

Much like the essay written by a family member of mine from a younger generation, let's make sure that our younger generations know all of this and pass the knowledge on—to keep remembering, to learn from our Elders, to learn about the sacrifices and achievements, and to connect with our past.

We have been given the gift of peace and freedom.

Wela'lin, Msi't Nokomaq

Lest We Forget!

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



My November Agenda

Ministers' Communication and Reach-Outs

Various ministers took the time to reach out to NWAC. We are looking forward to working with our new ministers within their different portfolios and developing a working relationship.

Noteworthy dates acknowledged on social media:

Indigenous Disability Month | 16 Days of Activism

Nov. 8: Aboriginal Veterans Day

Nov. 11: Remembrance Day | World Diabetes Day

November 14–20: Métis Week

Honouring the Métis contributions, culture, traditions, foods, music, and dance in Canada; traditional sashes; learning and understanding through virtual events

November 14 – World Diabetes Day

November 15: Philanthropist Day

Recognizing philanthropic contributions—and those people active in the philanthropic community—that help enrich our world; demonstrating the love of humanity

November 16: International Day for Tolerance

November 20: World Children's Day

November 25: International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

Working together to stamp out violence against women; focusing on MMIWG

Events

Acadia Inuit Gala & TRC

Students from Nunavut and others, guest speaker was Dr. Pitta (Peter) Irniq from Inuk, Mumilaaq Qaqqaq,

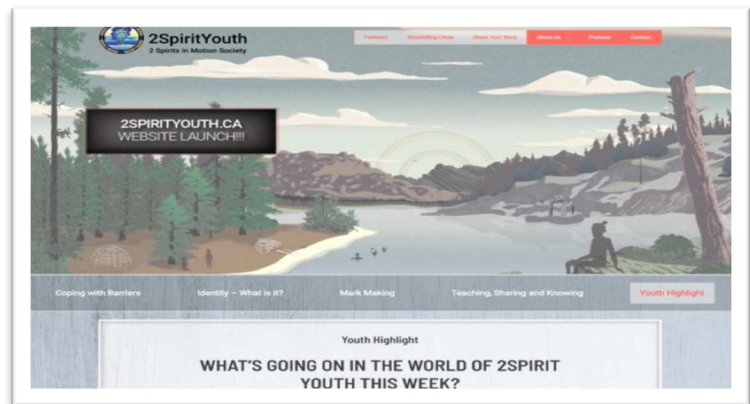


Inuktitut: ᐱᓄᓐᓂᓐᓂᓐᓂᓐ former Member of Parliament NDP Nunavut 2019, 2021, gathered online about the TRC Calls to Action. This course was offered to Acadia and Nunavut students through a joint partnership between Glooscap First Nation, Acadia University and Town of Wolfville.



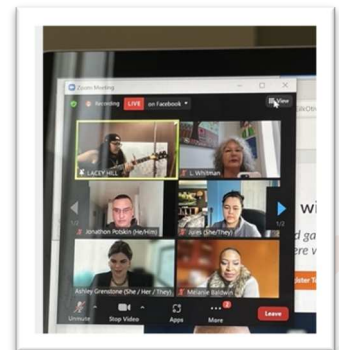
COP26, United Nations Climate Change Conference 2021

The 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference, more commonly referred to as COP26, was the 26th United Nations Climate Change conference. It was held at the SEC Centre in Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom, from October 31 to November 13, 2021. I was unable to travel to attend in person but through technology and conferences, I was able to explore areas of interest, including the impact of climate change on Indigenous Peoples.



2 Spirit Website Launch, 2 Spirits in Motion Society Commemoration

I was so pleased to be able to attend the virtual launch of the 2 Spirit website (2spirityouth.ca) with the support of funding partner Indigenous Services Canada. I said a few words and was truly touched by the event. The love and the compassion that we can show each other goes a long way, especially knowing that we are not alone.



Aboriginal Veterans Day Event

I attended various local events in my community, where I spoke to youth about the vital contributions of Indigenous Veteran men and women of Canada. It is our responsibility to communicate to our youth the contributions of our Veterans who gave so much. Through the banners that were raised across Mi'kma'ki and other territories, it gives a visual face to our veterans, making our community and youth more aware.

Remembrance Day Events

I had the honour of attending a local Remembrance Day event, where I lay the NWAC wreath and gave remarks. Due



to COVID-19, there were limited attendees, but we were able to stream the ceremony live through the Zoom platform.

Philanthropist Day Luncheon and Speech, Ashburn Gold and Country Club, Halifax

I was honoured to be part of the philanthropist celebration luncheon event, where I gave a few words! The spirit of giving from the heart is so important, it means so much and it makes a difference in every community.

University of Calgary Meet and Greet

I had the opportunity to meet with the President of the University of Calgary to discuss how the university can contribute to enhancing understanding by inviting guest speakers to talk about the contributions of Indigenous Peoples and how to move forward from the past. I will be speaking at the university in spring 2022.

Minister Marci Ien Meet and Greet

I was honoured to briefly meet the new Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth virtually. I am looking forward to working with our new Minister in the new year.

CBC Interview

“Strong women who are making a change” was the focus of an interview I had with CBC. I talked about Indigenous women who are taking key positions of power, just as the country looks for healing opportunities in the wake of the discoveries of unmarked graves at former residential schools.

Interview with The Gauntlet, University of Calgary’s Newspaper

I talked with *The Gauntlet* about media coverage around Missing Indigenous Women and Girls, and the role that systemic racism plays in defining victimhood—where race decides whether your child is found; where race decides how quickly justice is served. We touched on journalist Adriana Rolston’s review of the media coverage of women who had disappeared on the Highway of Tears. The recent shift in media coverage related to issues affecting the Indigenous community in Canada gives one hope.



Lorraine Whitman @L... · 2021-11-17 ...

It's [#IndigenousDisabilityMonth](#); we need to be inclusive and respectful of all, regardless of their disability. Let's embrace, respect and celebrate all diversities and vital members of our communities!



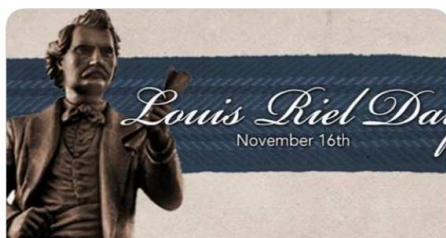
Lorraine Whitman @L... · 2021-11-16 ...

As a guest at the philanthropy luncheon at the [@afpns](#) at the [@AshburnGolfClub](#) I was so honoured to take part in this event! A special thanks to the group for such a warm welcome!!



Lorraine Whitman @L... · 2021-11-16 ...

Today is a national remembrance, ceremonies are held each year to honour his memory and legacy. He was executed for leading the Northwest Resistance in defence of Métis rights



metisnation.org

Louis Riel Day - Métis Nation of Ontario



Lorraine Whitman @LWhi... · 2021-11-11 ...
[#RemembranceDay](#) is here and these lovely Wiingashk Pins are crocheted & then sewn with sweetgrass as a medicine for purification. It represents kindness and su...



Lorraine Whitman @L... · 2021-11-10 ...

The [#MMIWG](#) issue is important amongst Turtle Island; and as an Indigenous Elder and leader living in Canada, I feel that the truth still needs to be acknowledged globally. The findings of the National Inquiry of the MMIWG have been stated as a genocide of the Indigenous people.

Anjali Appadurai · 2021-11-09

At [#COP26](#) where so many voices are excluded, it is powerful to see powerful Indigenous leadership from Turtle Island bringing attention to [#MMIW](#), which is a story repeated around the world.
[#IndigenousJusticeisClimateJustice](#)



Lorraine Whitman @L... · 2021-11-08 ...

Honouring my father Joseph B. Peters & my uncle Andrew Paul for their service on [#nationalaboriginalveteransday](#) - the [#Glooscap](#) Nation was known as expert marksmen and runners throughout their service.
[#lestweforget](#) [#virtualpoppy](#) [#canada](#) [#NS](#)



Joseph B. Peters
Andrew Paul
National Aboriginal
Veterans Day

[#NATIONALABORIGINALVETERANSDAY](#)
[#VIRTUALPOPPY](#)
[@LWHITMAN_KHAG](#)



Native Women's
Association of Canada



L'Association des
femmes autochtones
du Canada

nwac.ca