



NWAC

PRESIDENT'S *Report*



MARCH – APRIL 2023

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Native Women's Association of Canada
L'Association des femmes autochtones du Canada



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

MARCH

The last day of February I joined other Indigenous leaders in a meeting with the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations (UN) Ambassador Bob Rae to discuss the upcoming 67th United Nations Commission of the Status of Women (UNCSW67).

March started off with a productive Board meeting demonstrating how effective NWAC's governance meetings are. March 1st was also a busy day for my interim adviser, Lisa Smith who gave a presentation to the District School Board Ontario North East Indigenous Speaker Series. Lisa highlighted NWAC's work and provided resources to educators such as the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIWG) *Their Voices Will Guide Us* which provides a decolonized pedagogy.





Meetings

My interim adviser also supported the NWAC delegation at the 67th Commission of the Status of Women (UNCSW67). The theme was *Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls*. NWAC took this opportunity to discuss how Indigenous women, girls, transgendered, and gender diverse peoples can keep safe online. The delegation also promoted NWAC's POETA digispark program. In addition, the delegation connected with other Indigenous advocates such as the Social Justice Commissioner of Australia, June Oscar.

The Regional Youth delegate, Natalie Sterling-Moses met with other youth delegates and shared an inspirational message from the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) floor to NWAC's social media followers.





On March 14, I met with Pam Damoff who is the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety to discuss the C-21, *An Act to amend certain Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (firearms)*. I made sure the Parliamentary Secretary knew that this was an informational session *only* and did not amount to a consultation. Ms. Damoff assured me that it is okay if NWAC chooses not to have a position on the bill. She advised that the controversial amendments were withdrawn and offered to assist in providing the Board additional information.

On March 16th I gave a speech to the entire NWAC staff in honour of the *Staff Recognition Awards*. I expressed my sincere honour to have all our life journeys collide. I also expressed sincere gratitude for their exceptional work and commitment to making the world a kinder, safer place for Indigenous peoples.

On March 20, 2023, I met with Dan Vandel – Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency. I advised that I wanted to foster a positive relationship with the Minister. It was a successful meeting. We discussed issues such as food insecurity and housing needs in the North. Minister Vandel noted that he'd be happy to work along side me at the 22nd *United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)* as part of the Canadian delegation. I took this invite into consideration and decided to join the Minister on the Canadian Delegation.





On March 21, 2023, I met with Minister of Housing, Ahmed Hussen. The Minister called the meeting at the last minute and advised (during the meeting) that it was an engagement to discuss the *Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy* which he refers to as being “co-developed”. I invited the Minister to NWAC’s Social, Cultural, and Economic Innovation Centre to discuss further.

My interim adviser and I spent the work week of **March 27** to **March 31** in Ottawa.

On March 27, we were briefed on the role of our CEO, Lynne Groulx and her ambitious business plan. We also attended a reception at NWAC that was hosted by the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP).

March 28, we were briefed on the international file and the efforts to “Go Global”. On March 29 we were briefed on the Resiliency lodges and our warehouse. I decided to avail of the successful workshops hosted by the lodge and plan on doing a workshop on the seven grandfather teachings.





On March 30, I met with Minister Miller to lobby for increased core and enhanced core funding for sustainable and equitable funding pursuant to Call for Justice 1.8 and follow up on last month's meeting. For example, I asked the Minister to help secure a meeting with the Prime Minister pursuant to the NWAC – *Canada Accord*.

On March 30, I also virtually met with Kimberly Murray who was appointed as *Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites*. She highlighted her concerns with the investigation. She hopes to work with NWAC (national office and PTMAs) to have our voice heard during community gatherings etc. She advised that there is a special gathering in Montreal in September and that our presence would be greatly appreciated.





On March 31, I hosted a meeting with the Attorney General of Canada, David Lametti. We discussed and brain stormed areas where we can work together. I advised him that NWAC must be included in important justice

decision making tables. However, Lametti remained firm that he will be working within the government's 2015 decision to apply a distinctions-based approach. Despite not seeing eye to eye on that issue, we had a very successful meeting.

We also hosted the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), Roseanne Archibald. We discussed priority issues that we both want to work on, as National Indigenous leaders, such as the opioid crisis that is devastating our communities.

Media

Although March was a busy month, our office only received one media request which was with a reporter on anti-racism and inclusion at Future of Good to discuss Federal Budget 2023. I took this opportunity to lobby for core and enhanced core funding.

Committee Meetings

The Finance Committee met to discuss important matters on March 3rd. In addition, the executive held a meeting on March 23rd.





APRIL

April was a busy month for the President's office. Our team was busy vetting and replying to an influx of meeting requests. Lisa also did numerous briefings with me on emerging issues ect. We enjoyed the long Easter weekend but came back refreshed and ready to hit the road running.

On April 12th, I met with Ambassador Bob Rae as he wanted to talk to Indigenous leaders prior to the twenty-second session of the UNPFII that took place from April 17 – 28, 2023. I advised him that I could not travel because I had contracted COVID-19. He was disappointed that I would not be joining and wished me good health. He also extended an open invitation for me to visit New York and to meet with him at Canada's Permanent Mission. He advised of a roundtable he was hosting with Minister Vandell on April 18. I assured him that NWAC would be represented well since our CEO, Lynne Groulx would be present during the first week. We discussed the theme which was *"Indigenous Peoples, human health, planetary and territorial health and climate change: a rights-based approach."* I also advised him that NWAC would be hosting a side event.

When I was feeling better, I headed to Ottawa and stayed from **April 24 – 30**.





I received an invitation on behalf of Their Excellencies the Right Honourable Mary Simon, Governor General of Canada, and Mr. Whit Fraser, to attend a State Luncheon in honour of His Excellency Frank-Walter Steinmeier, President of the Federal Republic of Germany, and First Lady, Elke Büdenbender.

It was initially planned to be hosted at the Governor General's residence but was later moved to the Embassy of Germany in Ottawa. Amongst those in attendance were the German Ambassador, Sabine Sparwasser, the Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau and Sophie Grégoire Trudeau as well as the President of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier and First Lady, Elke Büdenbender. The National Chief of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) was also in attendance.

I spoke about the importance of family with the Prime Minister and officially invited him to NWAC. I reiterated that message to Sophie. Our office received correspondence from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) at the end of April that expressed a desire and commitment to work with our office.

Later that day I met (via teams) our new Chief of Staff to the CEO, Nancy Gauthier, and Media Relations Specialist Shinoah Cheechoo. I am excited to work as a team with the amazing new staff.



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(left to right) President of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, National Chief of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, Elmer St. Pierre, First Lady of Germany, Elke Bündenbender and Carol McBride



(left to right) Carol McBride and Governor General of Canada, Mary Simon



Carol McBride and Sophie Gregoire Trudeau





On April 25 I had the sincere honour to meet with the Correctional Investigator of Canada, Dr. Ivan Zinger. We hosted him and members of his staff at NWAC. CEO, Lynne Groulx, was also in the meeting. We had a fruitful discussion about the crisis facing our women in federal prisons as well as healing lodges and adequate funding in that regard. He advised that the Commissioner of the Correctional Service of Canada, Anne Kelly has a mandate that includes prioritizing working with and funding Indigenous organizations to ensure that Indigenous offenders have access to culturally relevant programming and supports in the community.

On April 26, my interim adviser met with members of the University of Victoria including Chancellor, Marion Buller. They expressed support for NWAC's work and stated that they would like to discuss areas of collaboration.



The month of April ended strong with a very successful By-Law Review Session on **April 28 and 29**. I want to thank everyone for their valuable inputs. It demonstrated the strength of our board and thus our internal governance. Our Board was efficient calling an impromptu Annual General Assembly (AGA) Committee meeting to set a date for our upcoming AGA.

The timing of the meeting was excellent since I got to celebrate my birthday Friday evening with a beautiful dinner. It was truly a gift to gather around a table with everyone.





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