

# Looking Out For Each Other: Assisting Aboriginal families and communities when an Aboriginal woman goes missing

A Project Update – August 2016

## The Project

Before another busy Fall gets underway, we thought we would send out an update on the status of the “Looking Out for Each Other” project and what has been accomplished over the summer months. As you know, the goal of the project is to provide non-discriminatory and non-victim blaming mechanisms to those who are in a position to make a difference in police investigation, media reporting and legal remedies to families and friends of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW), ultimately improving outcomes for missing Aboriginal persons.

## Contributions

The work began in the fall of 2015 when the President & Chief Wendy Wetteland of the New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council approached Jula Hughes for assistance with the development of a research project on the prevention and improved outcomes for missing indigenous women, girls, and gender minorities. Groundwork began when Jula made contact with Bridget Tolley, of Families of Sisters in Spirit, and discussed a lack of access to legal counsel, particularly when dealing with police action in cases of missing indigenous women. The meetings also highlighted the need for a helpline for family members and friends, a low-barrier access point for help (housed within Aboriginal community organizations), advice on how to interact with the police, and suggestions on how to best use media/social media.



Artist: Susan Sacobie

With a \$10,000.00 grant from the Voices of New Brunswick Women Consensus Building Forum, we have conducted a preliminary analysis of missing persons and media reporting on missing persons in New Brunswick. The project acquired the art piece above from Susan Sacobie, local Wolastoqey artist, for this project. The five women in represent knowledge, faith, wisdom, justice, and peace. They are wearing our traditional peaked hats decorated with the double curve motifs. The wampum belt on the bottom is our promise to each woman that their lives will be remembered, celebrated, and honoured, reminding us to rebuild our matriarchal standing within each family and community. The shields represent the obligation to guard one another because we are all connected.

Additionally, a \$15,000.00 Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network (UAKN) grant will help to fund a study to look at the organizational capacity of Atlantic Native Councils and Friendship Centres to deliver services, such as a helpline for families, police protocols to better consider risk factors regarding missing Aboriginal women, and media kits to assist journalists and journalism students with appropriate reporting on Aboriginal issues. The St. Johns Native Friendship Centre are also contributing financially to the capacity study. We submitted an application to Status of

Women Canada to fund the activities of this project. We are hoping to hear back on the status of this application in the near future.

Jula met with University of New Brunswick Research Services to discuss various funding opportunities which might be suitable for the research component of the study. In addition to suggesting submitting an application to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) for a Partnership Development Grant, UNB Research Services volunteered to explore other possible funding opportunities available in New Brunswick, including funding from potential provincial departments. In preparation for the SSHRC application, we have conducted an extensive literature review specifically concerning the areas of media reporting, policing, gender minorities, legal reporting and Healing Circles. We are also in the final stages of a Research Ethics Board application to be submitted in early September.

## Thank You

The NBAPC would like to thank everyone who has contributed to “Looking Out For Each Other” thus far. We are overwhelmed by the support shown by our communities regarding this important issue. We look forward to continuing our partnerships.

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New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council



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