

Looking Out For Each Other

A Project Update – August 2019



(Photo: Port Hope Simpson, Labrador with Michelle Perley, Dorothy Earle, and Elizabeth Blaney)

Celebrating Resilience and Place: A Nunatukavut Inuit Healing Journey

Michelle Perley, Project Manager, and Elizabeth Blaney, NBAPC Director, were invited by the Nunatukavut Community Council to travel to Port Hope Simpson, NL to participate in the MMIW event - *Celebrating Resilience and Place: A Nunatukavut Inuit Healing Journey*.

This was a full day event that began with the lighting of the Kullik/Qulliq, an Inuit traditional opening ceremony. There were 25 people in attendance from Labrador as well as from other regions of Canada. Participants were given packages that included a resource list for Labrador and a copy of Bette Middler's song *The Rose*. Convenors began by talking about the

background, facts and stats of MMIW, they then honored the known MMIW in Labrador with a candle lighting and name reading ceremony.

Participants discussed three questions.

- Are our communities safe?
- Do our girls have the life tools necessary for the outside world?
- How does the internet affect Indigenous women and girls – online dating, imagine and being Indigenous?

The outcome from discussions was varying views and experiences of people from different regions in Canada. The discussion touched upon system failures of Indigenous peoples, lack of safe spaces and cultural competency of mainstream service providers, rehabilitation programs for incarcerated offenders, and education programs available for youth in Labrador.

The afternoon session began with learning about the importance of self-help techniques and performing relaxation and controlled breathing exercises. This was followed by an art therapy session; where participants discussed MMIW issues while painting, beading, and making other crafts. This was a great healing approach as participants created something meaningful while talking about a heavy topic.

The afternoon ended with everyone sharing their art work/craft and thoughts about the day. This was followed by a community feast; which gave participants a chance to debrief and enjoy a meal together before heading home.



(Photo: Port Hope Simpson, Labrador with Curtis Brown)

Stories of Strength and Resilience from Labrador: Curtis Brown

Through the practice of art creation and display, Curtis Brown, shown above, was able to honor the life of his mother Daphne Mesher-Brown and walk through a journey of healing. His mother is an MMIW, she lost her life in 1970 in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

Daphne was just 23 when she was killed by Curtis's father, having been shot in her hospital bed, a place where she should have been safe and able to heal. She was there recovering from injuries she had already suffered from her husband.

Curtis told his story and that of his mother's while drawing upon the strength of the community and the resilience found in their support. He and his siblings lost their mother

at such a young age. No one should have to lose a parent, a child, or a loved one in this way. Daphne is loved and never forgotten.

The Conclusion of the National Inquiry #MMIWG and Our Project

The National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls completed in June. Findings from the Inquiry have been made public and the Government of Canada has acknowledged a system of genocide. Following the report, former NBAPC President and Chief Amanda LeBlanc wrote,

"NBAPC provided 46 recommendations to the National Inquiry highlighting the urgent need of governments to correct their practices of erasure of off-reserve and non-status Indigenous people and to consult with all Indigenous people and their representative organizations. We called on the Commissioners of the National Inquiry to recognize that daily impacts of discrimination and marginalization experienced by women and girls who live off-reserve and the refusal of settler institutions to mention them in policy puts Indigenous women and girls at risk of greater violence. We called on all Canadian settler institutions to demonstrate, through sustained and vigorous efforts, that they are dedicated to acknowledging and correcting systemic wrongs committed against Indigenous people, including perpetuating the false idea that Indigenous people only live on-reserve...."

Now that Canada has received this report, our expectation is to see action that will

better the lives of Indigenous people across our beautiful land and that Canada respects Indigenous peoples by implementing international instruments such as The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) that has been called for in numerous reports, commissions and from grassroots peoples since Canada's promise to do so. We also expect that this includes Canada's true commitment to work with Indigenous organizations such as ours, who have extensive knowledge and experience, to implement many of these Calls for Justice and better the lives of Indigenous people."

There are 231 Calls for Justice, all of which we plan to draw attention to over the coming year. We do not want these findings to be forgotten, nor should they be neglected. The Calls for Justice are an incredibly important outcome that need to provoke change. We hope that individuals, families, friends, and communities continue to receive support for what is, and has been, an incredibly painful and traumatic experience.

The NBAPC and NCNS Final Written Submission to the National Inquiry can be found at https://nbapc.org/lofeo-research-reports/?preview_nonce=0c53a93667&preview=true and the National Inquiry Final Report can be found at <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>.



(Photo: Alma MacDougall)

Honoring Alma MacDougall

It is with great sadness and the utmost respect that we honor the life of Alma MacDougall, who past away this July. President of the Aboriginal Women's Association of Prince Edward Island, Mi'kmaq Elder, Registered Nurse, and committed Indigenous activist, Alma was greatly admired and appreciated for her strength, hard work, compassion, and wisdom. She was recognised with the Governor General's Medal for her volunteer work. As an advocate, Alma worked tirelessly to support her community and the well-being of all Indigenous people including working on the LOFEO project.



(Photo: LOFEO Leadership Team Elizabeth Blaney, Jula Hughes, Amanda LeBlanc, Michelle Perley, Anthea Plummer and Elder Brenda Seeley)

May 2019 LOFEO Symposium

The LOFEO Symposium (May 15th-17th, 2019) was a huge success. The purpose of the event was to bring together project partners, community and academic researchers, stakeholders and the project Advisory Circle, to participate in presentations and discussions on the LOFEO project research and activities. Presentations included Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers working on the same MMIWG2S issue.

On May 15th we started off the Symposium at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery with a performance by Sisters of the Drum and an Indigenous Art Tour with Emma Hassencahl-Perley. On May 16th there was a signing of the Letter of Commitment between Fredericton Police Force (FPF) and NBAPC, establishing a working relationship that enables LOFEO and FPF to work together for improving outcomes in MMIWG2S.

Presentations on the 16th included the MMI FIND Helpline with Jula Hughes and Michelle Perley, National Inquiry work with Amanda LeBlanc and Elizabeth Blaney,

research on cultural competency training with Jennifer Shea and Cora Behan, and Annita Lucchesi’s presentation on her MMIW database, now housed at Sovereign Bodies Institute (<https://www.sovereignbodies.org>).



(Photo: May 15th Symposium Reception at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery)

On the evening of the 16th, Annita provided us with a creative mapping workshop, where participants created maps that told their life stories and experiences around MMIWG. On the 17th, there was a presentation on policing research from Montréal with Mirja Trilsch and Dominique Bernier, as well as from New Brunswick with Jula Hughes and Anthea Plummer. Findings from the report “Toward Peace, Harmony and Well-Being: Policing in Indigenous Communities” (<https://cca-reports.ca>), were presented by co-author Naiomi Metallic.



(Photo: May 16th Presentation with Annita Lucchesi at the Crowne Plaza Hotel)



(Photo: May 16th Letter of Commitment Signing between then Chief Leanne Fitch of the Fredericton Police Force and then NBAPC President and Chief Amanda LeBlanc)



(Photo: May 16th Letter of Commitment Signing between the Fredericton Police Force and then NBAPC President and Chief Amanda LeBlanc)

Fredericton Police Force Letter of Commitment

Chief Leanne Fitch, as one of her final acts before retirement, signed a Letter of Commitment, on behalf of the Fredericton Police Force (FPF) with NBAPC, solidifying their duty to work on the MMIWG2S issue. The FPF will work with NBAPC to ensure that protocols and tools are responsive to the needs of Indigenous missing persons and their loved ones. LOFEO will also have access to data from previous files on missing and murdered Indigenous persons as well as information on current curricula and cultural competency training for officers. This was an exciting development for the LOFEO project and the policing research team. The first stage of this commitment has already been fulfilled and we look forward to continuing to work with FPF as Chief Fitch has fully retired.



If you have information about a missing person, but you're not sure who to tell, we can help!

**Do not wait to act!
Report a missing person immediately!
There is no 24 hour waiting period!**

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