

# ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 1, 2018 – MARCH 31, 2019



# President's Message

It is my honour to introduce the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women's (IAAW) work over the 2018-2019 year.

IAAW's programs are continuing to grow, with over 200 Indigenous women enrolled over this past year. The growing numbers are not stopping the success of the programs. Our graduates often amaze us with the positive impact they make in their communities with their new skills.

Even with new skills, however, racism can hinder Indigenous women's ability to take leadership roles. Therefore, IAAW remains vigilant in identifying and addressing the racism Indigenous women face in institutions and everyday life through initiatives like the Indigenous Women's Justice Forum and advocacy. With important partners by our side, like the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund, we are more determined than ever to do this work.

On the national stage, the publication of the *Final Report on the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* (Final Report) has established what we, and similar organizations, have been stating for years; Indigenous women have unique issues and Indigenous women must lead the solutions to those issues. Now that the testimony has been heard, and the facts laid clear, we want to see action. The killings must stop.



*Muriel Stanley Venne sharing her passionate views.*

With the Final Report's findings, we are hopeful those with power will understand the severity of the current reality and will support our women in leading solutions. Along with thousands of Indigenous women and their families, IAAW is ready to answer the 231 Calls for Justice.

We cannot do this work alone. We need community, partners and government support. We want to work with partners who, like us, begin the work by honouring our women. I hope you enjoy reading about our work over this past year and I look forward to connecting with many of you to continue the work that needs to be done.

Respectfully submitted,

*Muriel Stanley Venne*

C.M.B.A. (Hon.)

# Organizational Profile

- The Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women (IAAW) recognizes the role, value, and achievements of Indigenous women in society and raises awareness around the challenges they face.
- We are a non-profit organization based in Edmonton though we conduct outreach to several Chapter communities throughout Alberta. We value the support and partnerships of 500 individual and corporate members.
- Our projects, services, and programs are developed by, and for, Alberta's Indigenous women.
- Projects are dedicated to Indigenous women living on and off reserves, on and off settlement lands, and within rural and urban settings.

## Organization Mandate

is to recognize and promote the leadership of Indigenous women in the province of Alberta in various ways: being actively involved; assisting Indigenous women to establish local representative groups; developing relationships that promote human rights and dignity for Indigenous peoples; and to address economic, social, cultural, and political issues at the municipal, provincial, federal, and international levels, especially issues that impact Indigenous women and their communities.

## Incorporation Information

- A.** Scope of Territory: Provincial/Territorial
- B.** Incorporation Information: Non-Profit Society
- C.** Charitable Status: In process of applying for Charitable Status
- D.** Date of Incorporation: September 29, 1995

## Structure of IAAW

### Board of Directors

- Muriel Stanley Venne, Edmonton  
President & Founder
- Marggo Pariseau, Edmonton  
Vice President
- Vi Marten, Fort Vermilion  
Secretary
- Lisa Higgerty, Hinton  
Treasurer
- Irene V. Loutitt, Wetaskiwin  
Director
- Josie Nepinak, Calgary  
Director
- Bernice Martial, Cold Lake  
Director

### IAAW Circle of Honour Elders

- Mary Brown, Slave Lake
- Loretta Bowen, Edmonton
- Myrtle Calahason, Edmonton
- Nellie Carlson, Edmonton
- Alma Dejarlais, High Prairie
- Marion Le Rat, Calgary
- Elsie Paul, Edmonton
- Lorraine Savard, Edmonton
- Linda Boudreau-Samaganis, St. Paul
- Blanche Bruised Head, Lethbridge

# Programs and Projects



## Leadership Development

- Esquao Leadership Development Program
- Young Indigenous Women's Leadership and Empowerment Camp
- Climate Change Community Visits
- Esquao Awards Gala 2018



## Poverty Reduction

- Empower U - Financial Independence Training
- Financial Empowerment Champions (FEC)



## Achieving Justice

- 2018 Indigenous Women's Justice Forum



## Violence Prevention

- Indigenous Women's Violence Prevention
- Safety in the City



## IAAW Capacity Building

- Community Initiatives Program
- Fundraising

## IAAW Services:

- Short-term workshops and training sessions on various topics.
- Networking and support services to women who would like to start programs in their community.
- Referrals and connection to services.
- Homelessness diversion for program participants.
- Transition services for women leaving correctional Institutions.

# Objective 1.

Develop and deliver services that advance the individual capacity of Aboriginal women, their families, and their communities.

## 2018-19 SUCCESSES

### Financial Literacy

- 36 program participants saved \$7,135, savings that were matched in the amount of \$10,080. The participants then spent \$15,415 on items to EARN, BUILD, or SAVE.
- Developed a new curriculum in partnership with E4C and Bissell Centre, as part of Prosper Canada's Financial Empowerment Champions three year initiative.

### Transition Services

- 72 women accessed transition services as they transitioned from federal prison to Edmonton.
- Firekeepers Circle welcomed 40 new women at their weekly support group.
- Diversion Housing Program assisted 14 women secure stable housing.

### Youth Leadership Development

- 85 young women gained leadership and safety skills by attending 7 workshops in Edmonton.
- 11 young women participated in a four-day retreat on safety and leadership.
- Received approval of funding of \$50,000 from FCSS through the City of Edmonton for year 2019.

### Indigenous Women's Violence Prevention Project

- Received approval of funding of \$178,200 to deliver Healthy Relationships Program, Couples Financial Literacy, as well as research, communication tools, and outreach to 10-20 communities in Alberta.

### Safety In The City

- Received approval of funding of \$100,000 to conduct community safety audits, deliver safety workshops, and create awareness on experiences of Indigenous women in public spaces in Edmonton.



Above: Poster from Leadership Event. | Right: Carrie Langevin presents to IAAW program participants.





*Left: Helen Northcott, Muriel Stanley Venne meeting on Advocacy. | Right: IAAW is with other women at a march for justice reforms in Edmonton.*

## Objective 2.

Create opportunities to address discrimination against Aboriginal women.

### 2018-19 SUCCESSES

#### Justice Forum

- On November 7th and 8th, 2018, IAAW hosted the Indigenous Women's Justice Forum, which created an opportunity for stakeholders and Indigenous women to discuss and strategize justice reforms.

#### Advocacy Services

- Assisted six women resolve local acts of discrimination by providing services that were not provided anywhere else in Edmonton.

#### The Rights Path Document

- IAAW staff have begun updating The Rights Path 4th Edition. This guide for human rights will be online by December 2019 and 500 copies will be printed.

# Objective 3.

Identify and promote opportunities for Indigenous women to participate in policy development and decision-making.

## 2018-19 SUCCESSES

### Financial Literacy

- Our participants are becoming leaders. IAAW trained two past participants to facilitate financial literacy programming.

### Adult Leadership Development

- Provided support and advice to encourage Indigenous women to run in the provincial election. Opportunities for leadership positions on boards/committees were shared on IAAW's social media and website.

### Justice Programs

- Engaged with partners (Ministry of Status of Women, Edmonton Police Service, Ministry of Justice/Solicitor General, City of Edmonton) regarding policy changes and initiatives.

### Youth Leadership Development

- Introduced 12 past participants to leadership-oriented forums, including Esquao Awards, and Indigenous Women's Justice Forum.



*Left: Muriel flanked by lawyer Bev Jacobs and LEAF lawyer at the Supreme Court of Canada Hearing. | Right: In front of Courthouse.*

# Objective 4.



*Josie Nepinak presents Esquao Award to Jackie Arimissia Bromley.*

Celebrate the strengths and achievements of Aboriginal women.

## 2018-19 SUCCESSES

### All Programs

- Through events like our Indigenous Women's Justice Forum and social justice gatherings, IAAW created opportunities for Indigenous women to share their experiences with decision makers and other important stakeholders.
- Captured success stories of 56 of program participants, linking them to IAAW's emphasis on The 7 Sacred Teachings.

### Outreach

- Held meetings for Aboriginal women in 20 communities in 2019. These meetings explained IAAW programs and resources while discussing local issues, concerns, and events.

### Elders

- Elders will participate and provide their advice on new and continuing programs.

### Esquao Awards

- Recognized 24 women at the 2018 Esquao Awards Gala.
- Promote the 2018 Esquao Awards by sending a one-page summary of the awards and biography of recipients to the media.



*AFN Regional Chief for Alberta Marlene Poitras with IAAW's Stephanie Harpe. | Right: Youth camper with IAAW's Bernadette (Bunny) Swanson.*

## Objective 5.

Establish forums and networks for Aboriginal women to exchange information and experiences.

### 2018-19 SUCCESSES

1. Through events like our Justice Forum and social justice events, IAAW created opportunities for Indigenous women to share their experiences with decision makers and other important stakeholders.
1. Developed a mapping program to continue to build connections, a pipeline of information, to Métis and First Nations women in Alberta.
2. Held meetings for women in 10 communities in 2018 on Climate Change.
3. Invited Elders to participate in leadership camps, Firekeepers Circle, and other programs.
4. Hosted the 2018 Indigenous Women's Justice Forum.

## 2018 Esquao Award Recipients

April Eve Wiberg, Edmonton  
Angela James, Wabasca  
Clarice Anderson, Edmonton  
Corie Flett, Fort McMurray  
Darcie Vielle, Standoff  
Denise Lambert, Sandy Beach  
Diane Ludwig, Lac La Biche  
Gwen Muskwa, Edmonton  
Jackie Arimissia Bromley,  
Calgary  
Jaclyn Carson, Pickardville  
Jacqueline Cardinal, Edmonton  
Lana Wotherspoon, Caslan  
Laurie Gloria Collins, Cold Lake  
Lena Heavy Shields Russell,  
Standoff  
Lisa Marie Bourque,  
Fort McMurray  
Lowa Beebe, Calgary  
Marlene Orr, Sherwood Park  
Mary Francis, High Level  
Mary Louise Cardinal, Wabasca  
Nancy Hollman Desjarlais,  
Fort McMurray  
Rose Aastveit, Lac La Biche  
Sarah Pocklington, Edmonton  
Shannon Alexis-Thomas, Alexis

## Dorothy McDonald Leadership Award

Chief Brenda Kehewin-Vanguard

# Esquao Awards 2018

## Benefits and Outcomes

- Corporations and government leaders participate in recognizing positive work of Indigenous women in Indigenous communities.
- Connections are made to women who could be consulted on upcoming policies and/or community involvement activities, expanding their social networks and ours.
- Negative stereotypes of Indigenous women are challenged with positive examples of why Indigenous women are necessary to build strong communities.
- Opportunity for Indigenous women and girls to find positive role models.
- Indigenous communities come together to recognize the accomplishments of local women.
- Indigenous communities showcase, celebrate, and embrace their beautiful cultures and traditions.

*Left to Right: Chief Brenda Kehewin-Vanguard is wrapped in ceremonial blanket by IAAW Circle of Honour Elders Lorraine Savard, Lorretta Bowen, Alma Desjarlais, Mary Brown, Marian LeRat, and Myrtle Calahason*



# Indigenous Women's Justice Forum

NOVEMBER 7 & 8, 2018

The Forum's objective can be best described by Patricia Monture, Mohawk lawyer, activist and author:

“Enough has been said and written about the devastating effects of the Canadian criminal justice system on both Aboriginal citizens and our nations. Despite this fact, little has been accomplished to do more than accommodate Aboriginal persons in the mainstream system. There has been no systematic change of Canadian justice institutions.”

“Women and Risk: Aboriginal Women, Colonialism and Correctional Practice”

## Key Findings and Actions

Throughout the Forum, participants and presenters provided key findings, observations, and recommendations. This section brings together important points raised during the two days, under eleven (11) themes:

1. Every one of us can start making changes today.
2. Indigenous women need to lead the process. We must share our stories, talk about what is happening and give our people a voice.
3. Culture and Tradition will lead to healing and change.
4. We need to strengthen support for Indigenous women who are fleeing violence.
5. Canada's criminal justice system must be overhauled.
6. Though the responsiveness of government programs and services has improved, there is still work to be done.
7. The foster care system is in crisis and problems need to be addressed.
8. The National Inquiry for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls has flaws.
9. Reconciliation is an important next step.
10. More can be done to support Indigenous women to access legal supports.
11. More can be done to support Indigenous women access victim services.



*Forum participants working hard to document solutions.*



*Esquao Awards 2018 Volunteers*

## Funders

- ATB Financial
- City of Edmonton
- Government of Alberta/  
Culture & Tourism: CIP
- Government of Alberta/  
Indigenous Relations
- Government of Alberta/Status  
of Women
- Prosper Canada  
(E4C Fiscal Agent)
- Suncor Community  
Foundation
- Syncrude Canada
- United Way of the Alberta  
Capital Region (Fiscal Agent  
Empower U)

## Contact Us

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