

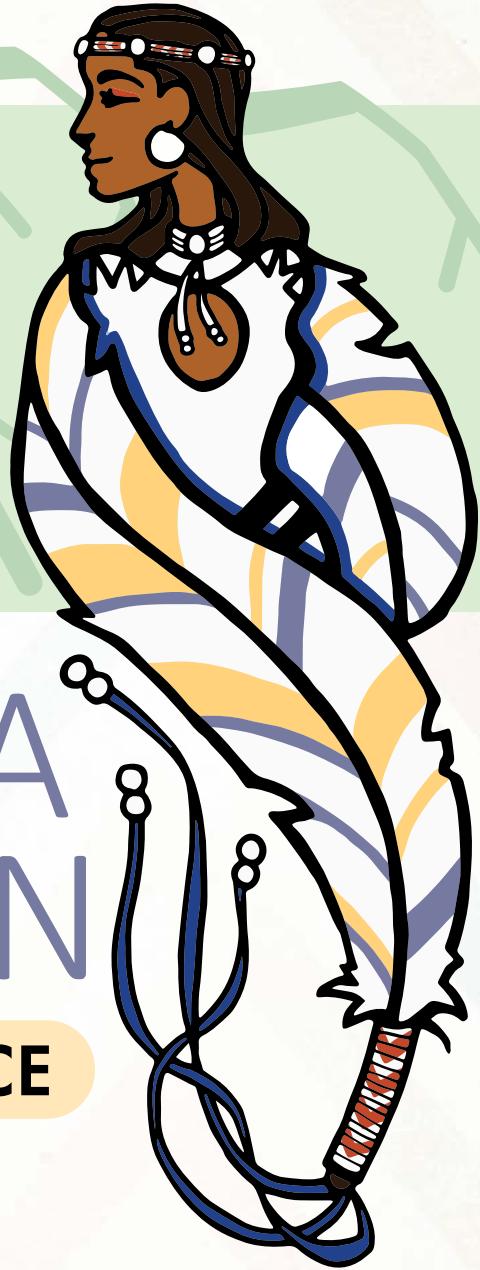
She Is Wise

NIBWAAKAA
INAADIZIWIN

7TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

February 9-11, 2026

Westin **Ottawa** Hotel
11 Colonel By Dr, Ottawa, ON K1N 9J1



Ontario Native Women's Association

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Follow ONWA on Social Media at: onwa.ca/social



Land Acknowledgement

The Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) acknowledges the land on which we gather, Ottawa is built on unceded Anishinabe Algonquin territory. This land is the traditional territory of the Anishinabe Algonquin Nation. There are many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples from across Turtle Island that live and work in the City of Ottawa and we value their past and present contributions to this land.





Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA)

At the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA), we celebrate and honour the safety and healing of Indigenous Women and Girls as they take up their leadership roles in the family, community and internationally for generations to come.

ONWA is a not-for-profit organization that empowers and supports all Indigenous women and their families in the province of Ontario through research, advocacy, policy development and programs that focus on local, regional and provincial activities.

Established in 1971, ONWA delivers culturally enriched programs and services to Indigenous women and their families regardless of their status or locality. We are committed to providing services that strengthen communities and guarantee the preservation of Indigenous culture, identity, art, language and heritage. Ending violence against Indigenous women and their families and ensuring equal access to justice, education, health services, environmental stewardship and economic development, sit at the cornerstone of the organization. ONWA insists on social and cultural well-being for all Indigenous women and their families, so that all women, regardless of tribal heritage may live their best life.

“She Is Wise”

Nibwaakaa Inaadiziwin (she is wise in ways of life) captures the voices and perspectives of Indigenous women, that seek to change the narrative of violence, through collective cultural and gendered empowerment. It acknowledges the wisdom and intelligence of women, as well as the life-giving power she carries within her.

ONWA is committed to creating safe spaces for Indigenous women’s storytelling that are culturally grounded, gender-based, and trauma -informed. This training will build upon the work of Indigenous women; retelling a story that has largely gone untold, replenishing our bundles with wise practices that will support efforts to build Indigenous women’s leadership. In doing so, we envision empowered women, strong families and safer communities.





Agenda

PLEASE NOTE: All times are recorded in Eastern Standard Time (EST) (GMT-4)

DAY ONE: GRANDMOTHERS

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9TH, 2026 | "Aligning Our Purpose with Spirit & Community"

7:30 AM	Breakfast
8:30 AM	Opening Celebrations, MC's Joan Riggs & Stan Wesley <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opening Prayer and Teachings, <i>Tina Armstrong</i>• <i>ONWA Passwewe Ikwewug Women's Drum Group</i>
8:45 AM	Welcoming Words <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Representative of the Anishinaabe-Algonquin Nation</i>• <i>Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition, Co-chairs Mary Daoust & Stephanie Mikki Adams</i>• <i>Stephanie Mikki Adams with Words of Poetry</i>• <i>Honourable Associate Minister Charmaine Williams</i>• <i>Cora McGuire-Cyrette, ONWA CEO</i>
9:30 AM	Knowledge Keepers Panel, facilitated by Stan Wesley <i>Tina Armstrong, Reepa Evic- Carleton, Renee Thomas-Hill, Maria Campbell, & Maria Linklater</i>
11:00 AM	Break
11:15 AM	Connecting Self and Grandmothers: A Healing Letter, Jenny Sutherland
12:00 PM	Lunch
1:00 PM	Tree Teachings, Joan Riggs, & Tina Armstrong
2:00 PM	Break
2:15 PM	Breakout Sessions: Planting in Wisdom Rich Soil <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Addressing Lateral Violence from Indigenous Women's Voices, <i>Collin Graham & Ingrid Green</i>• Awaken Your Gifts, <i>Christine Friday</i>• Circle of Knowledge – Empowering Indigenous Women's Research, <i>Manjit Pabla, & Sarah Mcpherson</i>• The Great Dream and Human Development, <i>Allen Sutherland</i>• Indigenous Women's Wise Practices in Data, <i>Thi Nguyen, Gerri Yerxa, & Kaileigh Winters</i>• Living in a Good Way: Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) principles, <i>Reepa Evic- Carleton</i>• Reclaiming Our Caregiver Roles, <i>Holly Doxtator, Donis Tucker, & Keira Smith</i>

- Relationship, Reciprocity & Remembrance, *Jody Harbour, & Jennifer Luxmore Begin*
- Sweetgrass Teachings & The Practice of Kindness, *Robin Beauclair, & Alicia Gordon*
- When We Turn I Into We, We Turn Illness to Wellness, *Bobbi Fletcher, Rhonda Braun, & Alandra Koss*

3:15 PM **Break**

3:30-4:30 PM **Indigenous Astronomy, Samantha Doxtator**



DAY TWO: MOTHERS & AUNTIES

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10TH, 2026 | "Roots of Care – Nurturing Caregivers"

7:30 AM **Breakfast**

8:30 AM **Morning Teachings, MC's Joan Riggs & Ingrid Green**

- Silla Inuit Throat Singers, *Charlotte Qamaniq, & Cynthia Pitsiulak*

8:45 AM **Welcoming Words & Introduction to Interactive Exercise, Joan Riggs**

9:00 AM **Mothering & Aunty-ing As Leadership, Dr. Kathy Absolon**

10:00 AM **Break**

10:30 AM **Anishinaabekwe Minwaajimo (Good Stories), Dr. Patricia McGuire**

12:00 PM **Lunch**

1:00 PM **Breakout Sessions: Nurturing Resilient Roots**

- Art of Healing, *Dr. Kathy Absolon & Tina Armstrong*
- Bamenim To Care For - Cultural Safety Training, *Collin Graham, Sarah Kaukinen, & Kylie Moyer*
- Birch Bark Teachings & Mini Birch Bark Canoe Making Activity (Day 1), *Miigwan Agawa & Alyssa Lentz*
- Fish Skin Tea Tanning, *Diane Montreuil*
- Gaag Porcupine Quill Earrings, *Audrey DeRoy*
- Inuit Female Leadership, *Stephanie Mikki Adams*
- Invisible Labour, Visible Strength: A Journey to Coming Back to Who We Are, *Felicia General & Alissa Zampaloni*
- Rag Rug Braiding, *Suzanne Jackson*
- Rolling Resilience Journey Teachings & Red Dress Seal Skin Pin, *Vanessa Brousseau*

3:00 PM **Break**

3:30-4:30 PM **Live Performance, Rebecca Strong, Canada's Got Talent Champion**



DAY THREE: DAUGHTERS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11TH, 2026 | "Strong Roots to Support a Thriving Forest"

7:30 AM	Breakfast
8:30 AM	Morning Teachings , MC's <i>Joan Riggs, Jennifer San, & Heidi Lucas</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Traditional Teachings, <i>Maria Campbell</i><i>ONWA Passwewe Ikwewug Women's Drum Group</i>
9:00 AM	Welcoming Words , <i>Joan Riggs</i>
8:45 AM	Youth Making Change Panel , facilitated by <i>Collin Graham</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Climate Justice, <i>Shelby Gagnon, Shaelyn Wabegijig</i>Language Revitalization, <i>Tia Adams</i>Sex Discrimination, <i>Zoe Craig-Sparrow</i>Sugar Bush Teachings, <i>Daanis Pellietier</i>
10:00 AM	Break
10:30 AM	Breakout Sessions: Growing Deep Rooted Forests <ul style="list-style-type: none">Birch Bark Teachings & Beading of Mini Birch Bark Canoes Activity (Day 2), <i>Miigwan Agawa & Alyssa Lentz</i>Caribou Tufting Workshop, <i>Hunter Corbiere</i>Crafting Mini Leather Mitts, <i>Mariah Abotossaway</i>From Global to Local: The Importance of Indigenous Rights Training and Awareness, <i>Daryl Kootenay</i>Gimashkawiziwiinaan: Indigenous Feminism and Anishinaabe Law, <i>Cassandra Spade</i>Indigenous Youth as Environmental Leaders, <i>Elaina Cox from Roots and Shoots</i>More Than a Mask: Creating, Reflecting, Empowering, <i>Sergeant Tara Singleton</i>Moving Indigenous Women's Stories to Advocacy to Action, <i>Julie Hodson & Heather Cameron</i>Restoring Safety: Protecting Body, Mind & Spirit, <i>Matt Richer</i>
12:00 PM	Lunch
1:00 PM	Honouring the Land and the Water , <i>Wabanoonkwe & Waawaate Fobister</i> Land Defense and Mercury Justice, Women and Children to the Front, Grassy Narrows Women's Group
2:00 PM	Break
2:45 PM	Water Stories , <i>Wabanoonkwe</i>
3:45 PM	Closing Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Cora McGuire-Cyrette, ONWA CEO</i><i>Closing Prayer, Tina Armstrong</i>

Presentations

DAY ONE | GRANDMOTHERS "Aligning Our Purpose with Spirit & Community"

Presentations and Keynotes

Knowledge Keepers Panel

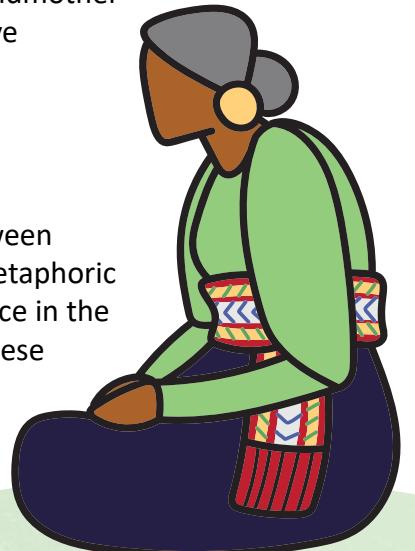
Presenter: Tina Armstrong, Reepa Evic-Carleton, Renee Thomas-Hill, Maria Campbell, & Maria Linklater, facilitated by Stan Wesley

A conversation with our Elders reflecting on how they carry their traditional roles, teachings for younger generations and daily practices that align purpose with spirit and community leadership.

Connecting Self and Grandmothers: A Healing Letter

Presenter: Jenny Sutherland

It is said that when Grandmothers speak the world begins to heal. It is timely that during this Season of Wintering, we take a moment to be still so we can truly reflect on what this means. This session will hold space for participants to connect to the beauty and strength of Grandmother Wisdom. Together, we will write letters that will allow the healing to move through us - heart to pen to paper to prayer.



Tree Teachings

Presenters: Joan Riggs, & Tina Armstrong

Indigenous teachings has a deep understanding of the relationships between trees, the environment, and cultural practices. Through this session, a metaphoric approach and utilization of the tree teachings will highlight the significance in the spiritual, ecological, and community contexts to healing and wellness. These teachings will emphasize respect, interconnectedness, and how we receive the wisdom of the ancestors.

Indigenous Astronomy

Presenter: Samantha Doxtator

Samantha will take you on an introspective journey through Haudenosaunee Cosmology from creation to current innovations, perseverance and the cycles of life and death that correlate with the stars.



Breakout Sessions: Planting in Wisdom Rich Soil

As we journey through life, we recognize that each person carries gifts and purposes. Guided by the wisdom shared by knowledge keepers, these breakout sessions invite reflection on aligning our work and communities with spirit and intention.

Addressing Lateral Violence from Indigenous Women's Voices

Presenters: Collin Graham & Ingrid Green

ONWA took a leading role in sitting with Indigenous women to listen and learn about the history of lateral violence and its unique impacts within their communities. Guided by what we heard through deep listening, ONWA developed the Healing, Empowerment, Reclamation, and Safety (HERS) training, grounded in the lived experiences and voices of Indigenous women. The Red Jingle Campaign will support this work at a national level by focusing on the solutions that are developed by Indigenous women for Indigenous women.

Awaken Your Gifts

Presenter: Christine Friday

Storytelling is a powerful way to connect to spirit and creation. Experience and witness the ability to transform energy through movement, breathing, and dance. Participants will learn techniques to ground and release, trust and let go.

Circle of Knowledge – Empowering Indigenous Women's Research

Presenters: Manjit Pabla, & Sarah Mcpherson

ONWA's Research and Evaluation portfolio is developing the 13 Grandmother Moon Phases Research Training Curriculum that reclaims Indigenous women's ways of knowing and being to support research and knowledge gathering that is empowering for Indigenous women. This breakout session will pilot the Phase 4 – Ethical and Relational Research module of the 13 Grandmother Moon training curriculum.

The Great Dream and Human Development

Presenter: Allen Sutherland

The Great Dream & Human Development invites participants into an Anishinaabe teaching of creation as living instruction—where Spirit dreams the world into being and continues dreaming through us. Allen Sutherland shares how Gichi-Bawaajigan (The Great Dream) maps to stages of human development—identity, belonging, responsibility, and purpose—offering practical reflections for healing, leadership, and wellness in today's world.



Indigenous Women's Wise Practices in Data

Presenters: Thi Nguyen, Gerri Yerxa, & Kaileigh Winters

This breakouts session will explore how Indigenous women understand, use, and guide data in ways that reflect community values, lived experience, and Indigenous ways of knowing. Rooted in stories, relationship, and collective responsibility, this session will look at wise practices that honour how Indigenous women gather information, make sense of it, and use it to support wellness, safety, advocacy, and decision-making. This session will pilot a training module that is part of a broader Indigenous women's research training curriculum currently being developed.

Living in a Good Way: Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) principles

Presenter: Reepa Evic-Carleton

In this 1 hour session, Reepa will begin this gathering with the lighting of the Qulliq lamp, followed by stories of her memories of living on the land and concepts of traditional, ethical Inuit law. Reepa will also share her teachings on Inuit IQ principles in this intimate and welcoming session.

Reclaiming Our Caregiver Roles

Presenters: Holly Doxtator, Donis Tucker, & Keira Smith

The content of the presentation will include traditional knowledge surrounding roles of family members and community, rites of passage, and protocols and principles in relation to traditional child-rearing. We will discuss the importance of caregiving with a two-eyed seeing approach and invite participants to reflect on their inherent knowledge, while challenging them to look ahead for future generations. We will use visual aids (PowerPoint slides) along with discussion questions to enhance participation. We will also provide an art activity for them to express how they will take up their leadership roles in their families and communities to reclaim their traditional caregiving roles. Throughout the presentation, we will share our Maamawi "All Together" Parenting Program and the impact it has made thus far in community. In addition, we will present the Indigenous Healthy Babies Healthy Children Program to promote and highlight the importance of early intervention, prevention, and advocacy.

Relationship, Reciprocity & Remembrance

Presenters: Jody Harbour, & Jennifer Luxmore Begin

Together, Jody and Jenn will offer teachings grounded in relationship, reciprocity, and remembrance. They invite participants to reflect on how environmental harm shows up in our families, bodies, and communities, and how we care for Mother Earth is expressed through everyday actions — what we take, what we return, and how we live with gratitude. Their work restores memory through story, reflection, and ceremony, helping Indigenous women reclaim their roles as caretakers of land, water, culture, and community. Their shared teaching is simple and powerful: we are not separate from the land — we are land, and we are medicine.

Sweetgrass Teachings & The Practice of Kindness

Presenters: Robin Beauclair, & Alicia Gordon

This workshop will share traditional teachings connected to Sweetgrass, focusing on its role in promoting balance, respect, and kindness within ourselves and our communities. Participants will be invited to learn through story, reflection, and hands-on activities that support cultural understanding, wellness, and relationship-building.

When We Turn I Into We, We Turn Illness to Wellness

Presenters: Bobbi Fletcher, Rhonda Braun, & Alandra Koss

When we change I to We; we change illness to wellness. Our mandate is to deliver programming that is strength-based and culturally grounded. The Community Wellness program supports the prevention of family violence, promotes health awareness, and provides peer-based mental health support.

In this workshop, participants will explore how the Community Wellness Program was created in Thunder Bay. We will share our annual planning process and how it supports Indigenous women's empowerment through each quadrant of the Medicine Circle. Participants will also have the opportunity to create a Medicine Turtle to add to their own bundles.

DAY TWO | MOTHERS & AUNTIES "Roots of Care – Nurturing Caregivers"

Presentations and Keynotes

Mothering & Aunty-ing As Leadership

Presenter: Dr. Kathy Absolon

Rooted in Indigenous teachings, this presentation explores mothering and aunty-ing as leadership, honouring the gifts of nurturing, guidance and care that sustain families, communities and workplaces. It explores humility, care, mentorship and ethical responsibility as gifts that guide leadership beyond colonial structures.

Anishinaabekwe Minwaajimo (Good Stories)

Presenter: Dr. Patricia McGuire



Indigenous women's stories profoundly impact their children, families, communities, and societies. Their knowledge transmission helps "to bring the world together." Their voices call out to future generations. The foundation is the collaborative 2018-2020 research stories from Anishinaabekwe involved with this project.

Live Performance

Presenter: Rebecca Strong

As the first Indigenous winner of Canada's Got Talent, Rebecca's story and successes showcase the importance of family and community and uplifting Indigenous women and supporting them to live their dreams.

Breakout Sessions: Nurturing Resilient Roots

Taking the time to reflect on the work of caregivers and invisible labour that forms the foundation and strength of our roots. These sessions explore nurturing, resilience and practices that support healing and community wellbeing.

Art of Healing

Presenters: Dr. Kathy Absolon & Tina Armstrong

Kathy And Tina love creating spaces for creativity and healing. Together they will share teachings and stories of healing and how creativity opens our spirits, hearts, minds, and presence. In this session participants can expect to enjoy the art of doodling while opening up channels between creativity and healing.

Bamenim To Care For - Cultural Safety Training

Presenters: Collin Graham, Sarah Kaukinen, & Kylie Moyer

This breakout session will explore how Bamenim — To Care For supports healthcare providers and organizations to strengthen cultural safety for Indigenous women and their families while accessing healthcare. Presenters will share how ONWA's cultural safety training moves beyond awareness to practical, relational, and systems-level approaches grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing. Using concrete examples and case studies from healthcare settings, presenters will highlight how self-reflection, accountability, and cultural teachings can shift care experiences and address systemic barriers.

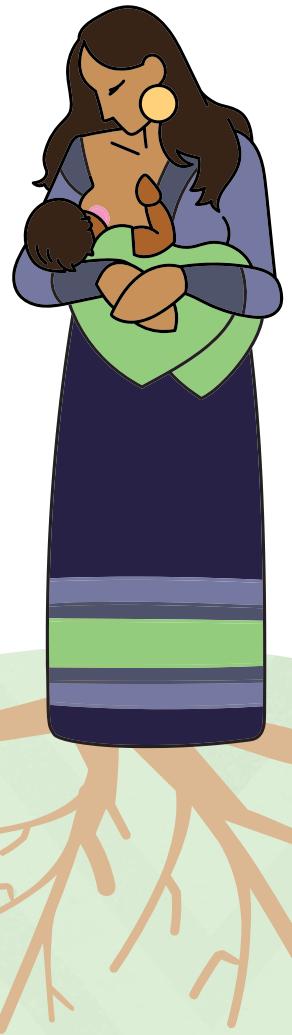
Participants will engage in guided reflection and dialogue that introduce ONWA's Indigenous Cultural Safety (ICS) training and preview the full-day program. The session is designed to inspire healthcare organizations to bring this training back to their teams as a concrete step toward improving safety, trust, and equity in care for Indigenous women and their families.

Birch Bark Teachings & Mini Birch Bark Canoe Making

Activity (Day 2 & 3)

Presenters: Miigwan Agawa & Alyssa Lentz

In this workshop, participants will learn about the teachings of the birch bark while assembling their own mini-Birch Bark canoes. On the second day participants will learn how to design and bead onto their birch bark canoes to complete a custom designed piece of artwork to take home.



Fish Skin Tea Tanning

Presenter: Diane Montreuil

During the workshop, Diane will provide a live demonstration on how to prepare salmon fish skin and transform it into leather using tea. The process will begin with cleaning the skin by removing the fat and scales. Participants will learn that the scales can be preserved and repurposed for artistic projects. Diane will also teach the seven day process required to cure fish skin and all the steps required.

Gaag Porcupine Quill Earrings

Presenter: Audrey DeRoy

This workshop focuses on the importance of healing trauma through Cultural Practices, teachings, language, storytelling, and spiritual connections to everything that gives us life! We will role model

and share teachings on how we create inclusive, safe, gender based and trauma informed approaches to healing together, connecting with the land/environment through land-based activities, and to ancestor's knowledge and way of being and life!

Through this workshop, you will leave with experience and shared knowledge on how to prepare the porcupine, process of harvesting the quills, and how to work with the porcupine quills and leave with a beautiful pair of porcupine quill earrings.

Inuit Female Leadership

Presenter: Stephanie Mikki Adams

Inuit women have long led with wisdom rooted in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) values that guide balance, respect, and unity. This 120-minute workshop explores how principles such as Piliriqatigiinniq (working together for a common cause), Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq (caring for the environment), Aajiiqatigiinniq (decision-making through consensus), and Pijitsirniq (serving others) are embodied in Inuit female leadership. Through storytelling, reflection, and discussion, participants will examine how these values shape approaches to collaboration, problem-solving, and governance in both community and organizational contexts. The session will highlight the resilience and cultural integrity that Inuit women bring to leadership, blending traditional wisdom with contemporary realities and will invite participants to reconnect leadership with compassion, humility, and service to others.

Invisible Labour, Visible Strength: A Journey to Coming Back to Who We Are

Presenters: Felicia General & Alissa Zampaloni

Invisible labour refers to the emotional, relational, cultural, and care-based work that is often expected, unrecognized, and undervalued. This is especially true for Indigenous women, caregivers, and those navigating systems shaped by colonial and patriarchal structures.

This workshop creates a reflective and experiential space to name the labour that is often carried quietly, including emotional holding, caregiving, advocacy, cultural responsibility, and survival. Participants will explore how burnout and exhaustion become normalized, how rest can feel unsafe or inaccessible, and how invisible labour shows up in families, workplaces, and communities.

Rag Rug Braiding

Presenter: Suzanne Jackson

As Indigenous women, our relationship with the land and our responsibility to protect Mother Earth, guide how we live and create. The practice of repurposing existing materials reflects our enduring role as caretakers of Mother Earth—honouring the past while nurturing resilience, creativity, and connection in the present.

In this hands-on workshop, Suzanne will focus on restoring a sense of purpose and belonging for our sisters, aunties, grandmothers, and daughters. Through the practice of creating braided rag rugs, she aims to open pathways for communication, healing, and reconnection—bridging the gap between feeling unneeded and truly belonging.

Rolling Resilience Journey Teachings & Red Dress Seal Skin Pin

Presenter: Vanessa Brousseau

In this interactive workshop, Vanessa Brousseau will share stories and teaching from her nationwide Rolling Resilience journey where she traveled across Canada in an RV motor vehicle raising awareness for MMIWG2S. Participants will also be creating their own Red Dress Seal Skin Pin as part of this workshop.

DAY THREE | DAUGHTERS "Strong Roots to Support a Thriving Forest"

Presentations and Keynotes

Youth Making Change Panel

Presenters: Climate Justice, Shelby Gagnon, Shaelyn Wabegijig; Language Revitalization, Tia Adams; Sex Discrimination, Zoe Craig-Sparrow; Sugar Bush Teachings, Daanis Pellietier; facilitated by Collin Graham

We explore what leadership looks like through the voices of today's youth leaders, the challenges they face, their hopes for the future, and how their strong roots help nurture the growth of their thriving forests.

Honouring the Land and the Water

Presenters: Wabanoonkwe & Waawaate Fobister

An engaging session discussing the rich culture and resilience of community members from Wabaseemoong and Grassy Narrows. They will share lived experiences regarding mercury poisoning and discuss how they have navigated their paths forward while fighting for clean water, equality, and improved access to resources within Canada.

Water Stories

Presenters: Wabanoonkwe

This dynamic fashion show uses fashion as an educational medium, creatively sharing powerful messages and stories with audiences in an inspiring showcase of design and expression.

Breakout Sessions: Growing Deep Rooted Forests

Through the lens of strong roots supporting a thriving forest, these sessions highlight empowerment, creativity and practices that nurture growth, resilience and thriving communities.

Birch Bark Teachings & Mini Birch Bark Canoe Making

Activity (Day 2 & 3)

Presenters: Miigwan Agawa & Alyssa Lentz

In this workshop, participants will learn about the teachings of the birch bark while assembling their own mini-Birch Bark canoes. On the second day participants will learn how to design and bead onto their birch bark canoes to complete a custom designed piece of artwork to take home.



Caribou Tufting Workshop

Presenter: Hunter Corbiere

Come and learn the art of tufting! An art form that uses small bunches of either caribou/reindeer or moose hair to create 3D sculptural designs. These usually are inspired by florals, leaves or animals. Each participant will create a caribou hair tufted wall art piece.

Crafting Mini Leather Mitts

Presenter: Mariah Abotossaway

Mini Leather Mitt workshop will include 6 pieces of cut leather, 3 leather needles, some beads and sinew. Through this 1.5 hour workshop, I will guide participants into creating these gloves while also talking about my experience in creating while dealing with the struggles of ADHD, Depression and Anxiety and how crafting has helped.

From Global to Local: The Importance of Indigenous Rights Training and Awareness

Presenter: Daryl Kootenay

This session explores the importance for increasing community members, especially youth, awareness and training of the United Nations History with Indigenous peoples and what role we need to step into as the intergenerational indigenous community. Daryl Kootenay will share key focus areas as the United Nations High Commissioners Office of Human Rights 2025 Indigenous Fellow and as a community member from the reservation who strives to bring the community together locally, nationally and internationally.

Gimashkawiziwinaan: Indigenous Feminism and Anishinaabe Law

Presenter: Cassandra Spade

The workshop shares a two-pronged approach that frontline service workers can employ in their efforts to end violence against Indigenous women. This workshop is framed within the context of legal services; however, the approach is transferrable to other frontline services.

First, the workshop shares about Indigenous feminism(s) as a lens to chip away at settlercolonialism and its associated harms that often plague frontline service work. Then, the workshop shares an approach that frontline service workers may use to revitalize and celebrate Indigenous knowledge and practices in local regions as a way to bring healing to Indigenous peoples. Participants will have the opportunity to learn about an Anishinaabe legal principle as a way to model this approach. In conclusion, participants will have the opportunity to learn about Indigenous feminism(s) and how it may relate to their practice, and an opportunity to learn about Anishinaabe law.

Indigenous Youth as Environmental Leaders

Presenter: Elaina Cox from Roots and Shoots

Lead by 25 under 25 Environmentalists in Canada award winner Elaina Cox, this workshop opens a dialogue to communicate about our relationship with sustainability, how to work together with all beings to defend the environment, and how to have the courage to stand up and lead in these spaces to truly become protectors and leaders for Mother Earth. In times of tension between economic and environmental concerns we discuss how to find balance and courage for not only the world around us, but our own wellbeing.

More Than a Mask: Creating, Reflecting, Empowering

Presenter: Sergeant Tara Singleton

This hands-on mask-making workshop invites women and youth to explore identity, self-perception, and empowerment. Participants paint the inside of a mask to reflect how they see themselves and the outside to show how they think others see them, discovering strengths and taking pride in their unique gifts. This fun, culturally grounded session fosters confidence, self-reflection, and personal growth.

Moving Indigenous Women's Stories to Advocacy to Action

Presenters: Julie Hodson & Heather Cameron

This breakout session will explore how ONWA as an Indigenous women's organization is taking up their responsibility to move Indigenous women's stories to advocacy and action. Presenters will share the different strategies that ONWA uses to influence government policy and advocate for change, highlighting Indigenous women's unique approach to advocacy and government relations. Using concrete examples of successful advocacy, presenters will demonstrate how Indigenous women and youth are reclaiming their leadership roles in decision-making processes that impact their lives. Participants will also have an opportunity to move their own stories to action through an arts-based activity.

Restoring Safety: Protecting Body, Mind & Spirit

Presenter: Matt Richer

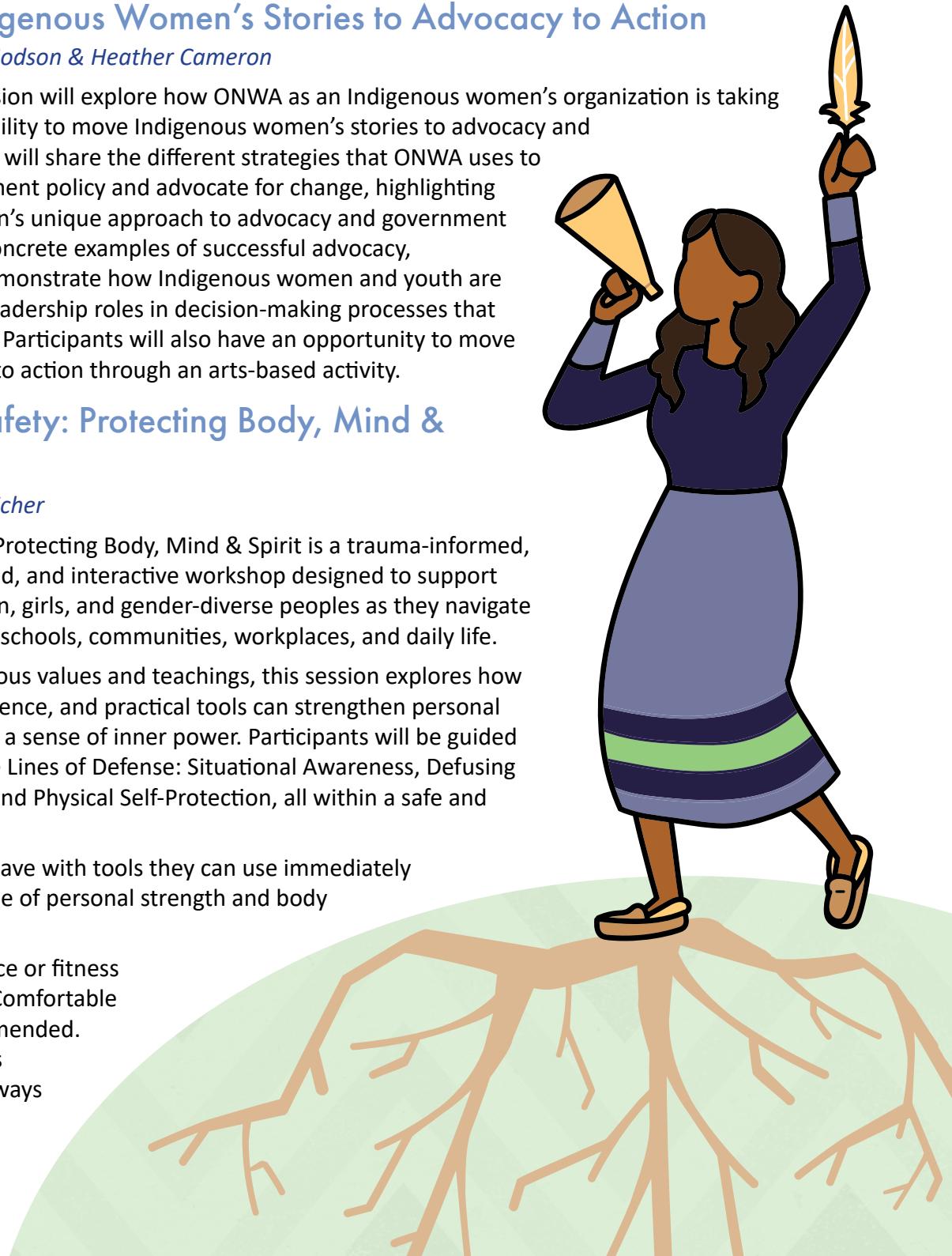
Restoring Safety: Protecting Body, Mind & Spirit is a trauma-informed, culturally grounded, and interactive workshop designed to support Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse peoples as they navigate personal safety in schools, communities, workplaces, and daily life.

Rooted in Indigenous values and teachings, this session explores how awareness, confidence, and practical tools can strengthen personal safety and restore a sense of inner power. Participants will be guided through the Three Lines of Defense: Situational Awareness, Defusing & De-escalation, and Physical Self-Protection, all within a safe and supportive space.

Participants will leave with tools they can use immediately and a deeper sense of personal strength and body sovereignty.

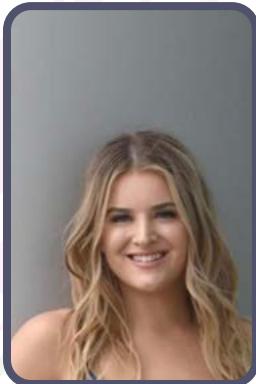
No prior experience or fitness level is required. Comfortable clothing is recommended.

Light movement is included and is always optional based on personal comfort.



Biographies

IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER (A-Z)



Alandra Koss is a dedicated Social Service Worker who graduated from the Social Service Worker program at Confederation College in 2023. Following graduation, Alandra began her career as a Residential Addiction Worker, providing trauma-informed, client-centred support to individuals navigating substance use recovery within residential treatment settings.

In June 2025, Alandra transitioned into a Mental Health Worker role with the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA), where she supports individuals and families through culturally safe, strengths-based, and holistic approaches to mental wellness. Her work emphasizes advocacy, empowerment, and compassionate care for those facing complex mental health and social challenges.



Alissa Zampaloni is a dedicated mental health and community support professional with an undergraduate degree in Psychology and a post-graduate certification. With roots in Six Nations of the Grand River, Turtle Clan, she brings a strong foundation in Indigenous-focused work grounded in culture, advocacy, and community wellness.

Alissa has experience across culturally grounded support services, advocacy, and program development, with a focus on empowering Indigenous individuals and families. Through her work in Gladue Aftercare, she supports clients using restorative, trauma-informed, and culturally relevant approaches to justice and healing. Committed to holistic wellness and Indigenous community advancement, Alissa continues to bridge traditional knowledge with contemporary care systems.



Allen Sutherland (White Spotted Horse) is Anishinaabe of the Lynx Clan from Skownan First Nation (Treaty 2 Territory, Manitoba). A pipe carrier and Sweat Lodge keeper, he is a wisdom keeper, historian, healer, teacher, and trainer who walks with Anishinaabe natural law and land-based teachings. He is the founder of Ginew Healing Lodge in Cooks Creek, Manitoba, where he offers traditional and holistic healing alongside contemporary trauma-informed approaches. Through ceremony, storytelling, and cultural frameworks, Allen supports individuals and organizations to return to balance, truth, and good living (Mino-Bimaadiziwin).

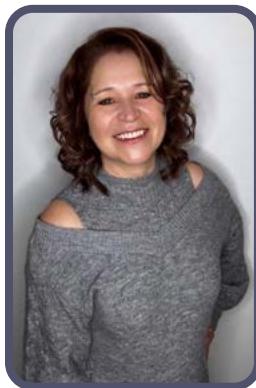


Alyssa Lentz (Meme Ngwa Ike) is an Anishinaabe Kwe and youth from Eabametoong First Nation. She has an HBA in Indigenous Learning and is currently in her first year of the Bachelor of Education Program at Lakehead University. As a canoe builder, crafter, and paddle instructor, she draws inspiration from her relationships with water, the land, and wiigwasaatig (birch tree). She built her first wiigwas jiiman (birch bark canoe) at 12 years old and has since become passionate about sharing her experience and relationship with wiigwas (birch bark) with Indigenous communities across Ontario. Alyssa views wiigwas as more than a material but as a teacher that has taught her patience and humility. She has learned the importance of ceremony and respecting the trees as they offer their bark for purpose. She recognizes that trees give life, protect and are tools in our Indigenous world.



Audrey DeRoy, BA/BEd., is of mixed heritage, Anishinaabe/French, and member of Anizaatikoong (Lac Des Mille Lacs) First Nation, and a mother of two wonderful adult children. She's employed by the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) as the Land-Based Supervisor, reconnecting Indigenous women and families to the land, language, and culture. Audrey is a First Nations' Education Teacher and was formerly employed by the Ministry of Education and Tourism, Culture and Sport. She is a passionate advocate for Indigenous peoples' identity, Anishinaabe spirituality, worldview, philosophy, history, contributions, ecological/technological knowledge, and teaching students and people of all ages, locally and internationally. Audrey is committed to reclaiming the Anishinaabemowin language and is actively involved in her community, in her role as an Indigenous Education Resource Person and Entrepreneur. She facilitates presentations, workshops, and market/retails her handmade items at Indigenous conferences, organizations, and educational institutions.

In the fall of the Millennium year, Audrey and her partner George Price, a Coast Salish Carver, raised a totem pole in Hope, British Columbia called "Coming Home" to honour all Indigenous women who fought for the reinstatement of Indigenous rights and equality, BillC-31 in Canada – Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, Yvonne Bedard, Mary Two-Axe Early, Sandra Lovelace, and Rose Charlie – and as remembrance of the strength of Indigenous women and families!



Bobbi Fletcher holds an Honours Bachelor of Social Work degree from Lakehead University. She is a Community Wellness worker at ONWA Thunder Bay, who has been working frontline for over 25 years. Within the last 5 years, she had been learning more about her Indigenous culture which she shares readily with community members. She is a member of the Missanabie Cree First Nation and has served her community as a Councilor.



Cassandra Spade is a human rights advocate from Mishkeegogamang First Nation, located in Northwestern Ontario. She holds a B.A. from the University of Manitoba and J.D. from the Bora Laskin Faculty of Law at Lakehead University where upon graduation she was awarded the Justice Rosalie Silberman Abella Prize. Currently, she is an associate lawyer at Judson Howie LLP and practices primarily in the areas of Anishinaabe law and family law.



The Honourable Charmaine Williams

Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity

Charmaine Williams was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in the 2022 provincial election. She represents the riding of Brampton Centre as a member of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario. She is currently the Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity and is the first Black woman to be appointed to a PC Cabinet. Prior to provincial politics, she was elected to the Brampton City Council.

Williams has also had a 19-year career as a certified Multi-Systemic Therapist, Behavioural Consultant, and Counsellor. As a mother of five children, she understands the importance of advocating for those who cannot always advocate for themselves.

As a Brampton City Councillor, she had the opportunity to spearhead numerous economic, social, and cultural initiatives that benefited Brampton communities. Her track record of success is testament to her ability to help communities thrive, build programs and institutions to support vulnerable populations, and provide dependable leadership.

She now carries her passion and experience into her new role as Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity, where she intends to make lasting effort that positively impacts women and families across Ontario.



Christine Friday is Anishinaabe Kwe from Temagami First Nation. She is a proficient and resilient Indigenous storyteller with over 32 years of experience in her dance career as a choreographer, film filmmaker, elevating youth and land-based programming through retreats and cultural creation camps. Christine resides in her ancestral homeland on Bear Island Lake in Temagami, where she turns her dreams into reality. Recently, she launched her dance studio lodge, a state-of-the-art facility situated in the bush that serves as a community platform focused on connection to the land, empowerment, and truth. www.fridaycreeations.ca



Collin Graham is from Ochiichagwe' Babigo'Ining Ojibway First Nation. He grew up in Thunder Bay, ON. Collin has been an advocate in community development for over 20 years. Collin currently works at the Ontario Native Women's Association as a Community Development Manager that oversees building capacity and training initiatives. His past work includes working in Anti-Human trafficking, Sexual Health, and the Mental Health sector, as well as working with youth. Collin is a huge advocate for the youth and empowers the 2SLGBTQ+ community through experiential learning.

Collin studied in Thunder Bay, Ontario and White Rock, British Columbia. Collin is passionate about deconstructing colonialism at different levels through community, as well as on an individual basis. "It's important that we have conversations with ourselves and to look at how we play a part in upholding structures of power." Collin is known for using humour as he believes it's a pillar of resiliency amongst Indigenous communities and can be used as a healing tool.



Cora McGuire-Cyrette is a proud member of the Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek (Sand Point First Nation) and lives in Thunder Bay with her husband, family, and many pets.

Cora has been the Chief Executive Officer of the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA), the largest and oldest Indigenous women's organization in Canada, since 2015. Under her leadership, she has tripled programs and increased the ONWA's employment by 400%.

Cora is a fierce advocate for the safety, healing, and leadership of Indigenous women and girls. She has led ONWA's expanding international advocacy, including multiple United Nations forums. She has played a critical role in advancing the Ontario Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and currently serves as Co-Chair of the Indigenous Women's Advisory Council of Ontario and Chair of Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services.

Cora holds a BA from Lakehead University and an MMBA from York University's Schulich School of Business. In 2021, Cora was the Women's Executive Network (WXN) Canada's Most Powerful Women Top 100, Mercedes-Benz Emerging Leader recipient.



Daanis Pelletier (she/her) is Anishinaabe from Fort William First Nation - an Anishinaabe community located on the north shore of Lake Superior in Canada. As a sugar busher, advocate, and young leader, she aims to nourish and protect Indigenous nationhoods through promoting the resurgence of our inherent knowledge and legal systems; language, art, and food sovereignty practices. She is in her fourth year studying Indigenous Learning with a minor in Philosophy at Lakehead University. Daanis expresses her self-care, love, values and relationships through her art of beading. Daanis is inspired by the environment, her mom, and her mentors.



Daryl Kootenay is a Traditional singer, dancer, artist, & facilitator. Daryl is a father to 3 beautiful children from the Stoney Nakoda Nation of Treaty 7 in southern Alberta and a member of the Dine (Navajo) Nation in New Mexico from his father's heritage.

Daryl has actively volunteered in his community of Mini Thni (formerly Morley), Alberta in a variety of roles. This includes being a group leader for various Projects (Nakoda Outdoor Wilderness Experience (NOWE), Youth Engagement Strategy Program (YES), Canada Bridges, and co-founding the Stoney Nakoda Youth Council in 2014. Daryl's more recent roles locally and globally are Co-Convener for the Mi'ki Wakan World Indigenous Peoples Summit, Faculty member at the Banff Centre for Indigenous Leadership, North American Focal Point for the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus to the United Nations and Co-Executive Director of the Howl Experience.



Diane Montreuil

In the vibrant swirl of paint, Diane, a proud Métis Algonquin from the Hawk Clan, channels the whispers of her ancestors. Each brushstroke is a conduit, flowing with the teachings of her grandmother and the Elders who have shaped her vibrant tapestry of identity. Adorned with forms and figures that celebrate their rich heritage, Diane's artistry serves as a powerful tool of communication; a heartfelt invitation to witness the beauty embedded in the traditional ways of her community.

As she stands before the canvas, often transformative moments unfold. Color becomes history, shapes morph into stories, and textures transmit age-old wisdom. Her paintings are not mere reflections of the past; they are alive, a celebration of resilience and love. They navigate the complexities of cultural identity, beckoning viewers to explore the unity and strength within the Algonquin peoples—a dance of vibrant hues and profound symbols.

In her dual role as an artist and educator, Diane actively engages with students, igniting their imaginations and connecting them deeply with their heritage through interactive workshops and collaborative projects. As a proud member of the CARFAC Association of Visual and Media Artists in Ontario, she advocates for the recognition and promotion of Indigenous artwork, ensuring that the voices of her community resonate within the broader art landscape.

Her impact resonates through generations at the Toronto Catholic District School Board, where she holds the honorary position of Knowledge Keeper in Residence. Here, Diane embodies the role of mentor, sharing not only her artistic prowess.



Donis Tucker is a member of Couchiching First Nation in Treaty #3. She is a knowledge carrier with over a decade of experience supporting Indigenous children, families, and communities.

Donis currently serves as a Program Coordinator for the Indigenous Healthy Babies Healthy Children and Youth in Transition programs at the Ontario Native Women's Association, where she works to strengthen family systems through trauma-informed, culturally grounded, community-led approaches. Her professional background includes Indigenous child protection, children's mental health, child development, and early intervention.

A facilitator trainer for the Maamawi All Together Parenting Program, Donis is

deeply committed to restoring intergenerational traditional knowledge and reinforcing the importance of kinship. She carries traditional teachings related to prenatal and postnatal care, early years development, and rites of passage, and brings these teachings forward alongside Western practices in a way that honours both.

Donis is also a drum carrier and a mother of two daughters, roles that shape her understanding of caregiving as both sacred responsibility and living practice. Her work is rooted in the belief that Indigenous families already hold the inherent knowledge needed to raise healthy children and communities when supported, honoured, and empowered.



Elaina Cox is a Top 25 Environmentalist Under 25 award winner equipped with several years of experience in environmental, climate and sustainability work through affiliations with governments, academic institutions, national and international organizations and non-profits. She completed her master's degree from the University of Waterloo with a thesis in Indigenous Conservation while simultaneously working at Parks Canada's National Office in Indigenous Stewardship and Engagement and as a researcher on a developing book regarding First Nations Treaties and the SDGs. She previously acquired a Bachelor in Honours Environmental Governance and a double minor in Honours Political Science and Geographic Information System and Environmental Analysis from the University of Guelph. She is currently employed with the Sustainable Forestry

Initiative as an Indigenous Relations Coordinator to support diverse community interests within the forestry sector of Canada and the United States. Elaina sits on a variety of boards and councils to which she has made significant contributions to their evolving projects and successes. Her areas of expertise encompass national and international biodiversity, reconciliation, and climate instruments and agreements; the incorporation of traditional knowledge and practices; and, advocating for the inclusion of women, youth and Indigenous Peoples and their perspectives in decision-making processes.



Felicia General is an Indigenous community facilitator and social service professional with over 20 years of experience supporting Indigenous women, children, and families through trauma-informed, culturally grounded practice. She lives on the traditional territory of the Six Nations of the Grand River and is Bear Clan.

Felicia's work is shaped by lived experience, Indigenous knowledge systems, and intergenerational truth. Her grandmother was a Residential School survivor of the Mount Elgin Indian Residential School, also known as the Muncey Institute in Muncey, Ontario, and many of her aunties and uncles also attended Residential Schools. As an intergenerational Residential School survivor, Felicia carries both the impacts of this history and a deep commitment to healing, reclamation, and continuity for future generations.

Throughout her career, Felicia has worked extensively with families and Indigenous women in community settings, offering supportive and culturally rooted guidance that includes land-based work, traditional practices, and healing-centred approaches. Her work centres relationship, safety, choice, and cultural reconnection, while recognizing the ongoing impacts of colonial systems on Indigenous lives. She supports emotional, spiritual, physical, and relational well-being through Indigenous worldviews and trauma-informed practice.

Felicia is also a mother to three daughters, whom she is raising to be strong Indigenous women who

know who they are and where they come from. She teaches them to use their voices and to be proud of their roots in both faith and culture. Motherhood deeply informs her work and reinforces the importance of care, balance, and truth-telling across generations.



Gerri Yerxa is a Manager with ONWA's Research and Evaluation Portfolio, where she oversees the planning, implementation and evaluation of research projects and ensures research, evaluation and data governance align with ONWA's vision and mandate while prioritizing Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

Gerri has over 30 years of experience in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous work environments providing direct service within specialized settings such as mental health and addictions, geriatric psychiatry, child welfare and primary care, before moving into senior leadership and administrative roles.

Gerri resides with her family on Couchiching First Nation located in Treaty 3. Gerri is a member of Thessalon First Nation - Robinson Huron Treaty Territory and acknowledges her Italian ancestry.



Heather Cameron a Senior Advisor with ONWA's Policy, Strategy, and Communications Portfolio. She has been with ONWA since 2015, serving different roles within Strategy, Policy and Research. Heather is dedicated to ending violence against Indigenous women and girls, and improving the safety and wellbeing of Indigenous women and their families.

Heather was raised in Thunder Bay, ON and is a member of Fort Albany First Nation. Her educational background includes a Master's Degree in Sociology with Specialization in Women's Studies from Lakehead University as well as diploma in Aboriginal Law and Advocacy from Negahneewin College.



Heidi Uluuti Lucas is a proud urban Inuk with family ties to Grise Fiord and Pond Inlet in the Nunavut High Arctic. They have found a home in Ottawa, moving here after studying in the United States and working with Tribal communities for several years. Heidi is incredibly grateful to be a part of the Ottawa urban Indigenous community and is passionate about giving back to the community. Heidi is a Researcher with the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition, working diligently to ensure that the stories of the Indigenous community are heard, empowered, and advocated for. They strive to be a kind, caring, and empathetic person, respecting the many good teachings they have learned from others. Heidi is honoured to spend time with and learn from the many strong Indigenous women gathered here at She Is Wise.



Holly Doxtator is a member of the Onieda Nations of the Thames reserve located just outside of London, Ontario. She is of the bear clan. Holly is a proud drum and song carrier and has utilized this skill as part of her healing journey. Holly is the mother of three daughters and grandmother of one granddaughter.

Holly has been an active and respected member of the Indigenous community for over 20 years. Her experience, teachings, and lived knowledge make her a resource for anyone seeking authentic guidance. She is a facilitator, and a carrier of traditional practices, and she consistently shares these teachings in a way that is welcoming, inclusive, and grounded.

Holly demonstrated reliability, professionalism, and deep cultural integrity. She brings wisdom, patience, and a natural ability to support others in a good way. Her teachings are rooted in respect, kindness, and the values passed down through our communities. Anyone who has worked with Holly can see the positive impact she brings to every space she is part of.



Hunter Corbiere is an Anishinaabekwe from M'Chigeeng First Nation. She currently lives and creates in her home town Waubaushene, located on the Southern Shores of Georgian Bay. A friend of the land, Corbiere is a graduate of the Forestry Technician program, from Sir Sandford Fleming College and is the award winner of the 2020 Forest Products Association of Canada (FPAC), Skills for Indigenous Youth award. She is also a self taught artist and a Business owner of Noopimiing Creations, creating art ranging from beading, tufting, moccasin making and digital design; carrying on the artwork of her grandmother Marie Brunelle. Combining her passion for the land and traditional art, she strives to work with sustainable materials and hopes she can tie the connection to the protection of mother earth through her pieces. Just recently in 2025, she

attended her first Artist Residency at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, being able to strengthen her skill in ecological engagement through her artwork. As she continues to keep learning, she also carries a passion for teaching, and sharing the knowledge she learns as she goes.



Ingrid Green is from Kenora, ON, but considers Lake of the Woods home. She is a registered member of the Lac Seul First Nation. She is the daughter of Catherine (Kitty) Everson nee Wesley and Ronald Everson and is the youngest of eight children. Ingrid is the mother of one fabulous son, Nathaniel Green and has many nieces and nephews that she loves as her very own.

Ingrid graduated with First Class Standing in the Indigenous Learning Honours Program with a Minor in Women Studies from Lakehead University.

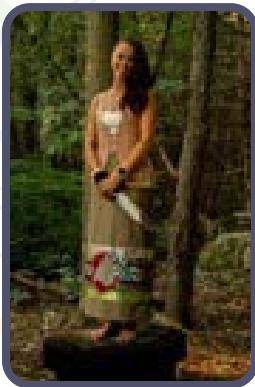
Ingrid is committed to working for and with Indigenous women. Ingrid has worked at the Ontario Native Women's Association for 18 years in several different positions, continuously supporting and developing programs specific to meeting Indigenous women's safety needs. Currently, Ingrid is the Director of Research and Evaluation at ONWA and is also the Contributing Editor of the She Is Wise Magazine, a bi-annual magazine that is published by the Ontario Native Women's Association.



Jennifer Luxmore-Begin (she/her, @luxybeg1) is a creative, musician, educator, Water Walker, and settler-Anishinaabe woman, member of Mattagami First Nation. She is the creator of 13 Moons of Creation, a lunar calendar grounded in Anishinaabe moon teachings that reconnect women to the cycles of Grandmother Moon and the seasons of Mother Earth. Through women's circles, beadwork, music, and seasonal teachings, Jenn invites people to slow down and listen — to their bodies, to the waters, and to the quiet instructions carried in the land.



Jennifer San is proudly living as an urban-indigenous Ottawa community member with roots in Caldwell First Nation and Cambodia. She is the Indigenous Women's Safety Table Coordinator and an Indigenous Well-Being Worker at the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition and is driven by work focusing on improving safety and wellness in the urban indigenous community and in her home nation. Jennifer radiates positive energy, fostering deep connections and promoting healing in all those she meets. In her free time, she enjoys singing (only when no one is around), hiking, swimming, and spending time with her family. Jennifer is honoured to be included in the She Is Wise conference and learn from the wise grandmothers, mothers, aunties, and daughters attending.



Jenny Sutherland (Mihko-Asiniy-Kinepik-Isbew) is a proud member of Moose Cree First Nation, located in the Mosoni-llilew and Mushkegowuk territory. I'm a nationally recognized speaker and operate my private practice, Red Stone Snake Woman, as a Psychotherapist and Indigenous Healer, blending cognitive behavioural therapy with Indigenous ceremonies, energy work, and land-based healing.

I hold an Honours BA in Psychology and a Master's in Social Work, with over 25 years of experience in social work, training, and consultation. Through this work, I've become a Truth and Reconciliation Specialist and dedicated my life to studying with Elders and Traditional Healers. As an educator and speaker, I offer keynote addresses like "Sharing Medicine: Reconciling Our Sacred Relationships to Each Other and the Land" and "Indigenous Perspectives on Wellbeing: The Spiritual Way Forward." I combine my knowledge of the Medicine Wheel and the Seven Grandfather Teachings with my experience as a psychotherapist and healer to offer a path forward into holistic healing.



Joan Riggs is based in Ottawa and is a long time facilitator primarily working with women to strengthen our voices, restore our place in society and celebrate our incredible gifts. She is a founding partner of Catalyst Research and Communications and the facilitator for the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition. She has taught for 35 years with First Nation Technical Institute, most recently at Toronto Metropolitan University in the Indigenous Public Administration and Indigenous Social Work programs.



Jody Harbour is an Urban Indigenous woman, entrepreneur, and senior executive with more than 30 years of experience across manufacturing, textile design, apparel, and sales industries. As co-founder of Grandmother's Voice, she works alongside Indigenous Grandmothers, Knowledge Keepers, and Elders to carry ancestral teachings into health, wellness, leadership, and community systems. Her leadership reflects ONWA's commitment to empowering Indigenous women to shape the systems that affect their families and Nations, bridging boardrooms and ceremony with a focus on responsibility, relationship, and long-term stewardship.



Julie Hodson is a Senior Advisor with ONWA's Policy, Strategy, and Communications Portfolio, where she helps to advocate for systems change and works to strengthen ONWA's voice and influence at the local, provincial, national, and international levels. Julie has over 15 years of experience in social policy and program development, implementation and advocacy within government and Indigenous not-for-profit organizations in Ontario and abroad. As a second-generation settler of British ancestry, Julie remains on a path of unlearning colonial ways of knowing, doing, and being. Throughout her journey, she has been privileged to walk with and learn from many Indigenous women leaders and disruptors whose wisdom, teachings, and stories continue to guide her in her work and life.

Born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and raised in Southwestern Ontario, Julie now makes her home in Ottawa, on the traditional un-ceded territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation. She lives with her partner and their young (fierce, like her mom) daughter.



Kaileigh Winters is a research assistant (RA) with the Ontario Native Women's Association. She provides support to the research and evaluation portfolio, assisting with community-based research projects and engagements that are dedicated to empowering Indigenous women and their families. She was born and raised here in beautiful Ottawa, Ontario, built on the traditional un-ceded territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation. She is proudly Inuk with heritage from the Nunatsiavut region in Labrador. She graduated from Carleton University in 2025 with High Distinction, earning a Bachelor of Arts Honours degree with a major in criminology and criminal justice and a concentration in law. During her studies she had the privilege of completing a practicum placement with the restorative justice program at Tungasuvvingat Inuit, as well as an internship with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation as a junior researcher. She is passionate about supporting reconciliation efforts and advocating for Indigenous rights. Some of her other hobbies/ passions include reading, walking in nature, animals, hockey, cooking, bingeing TV shows/movies, and spending quality time with family and friends.



Dr. Kathy Absolon (Minogiizhigokwe – Shining Day Woman)

is Anishinaabe kwe who is a community helper, knowledge seeker, knowledge carrier, educator, re-searcher and writer. Kathy is a member of Flying Post First Nation Treaty 9. Kathy carries truth stories about both a rich cultural history and Canada's colonial history. Her lifetime of work in generating decolonial stories and Indigenous education has been informed by her land-based philosophy. Currently, Kathy is a Professor in the Indigenous Field of Study, Masters of Social Work Program in the Faculty of Social Work. She is also the founder and Knowledge Keeper for the Centre for Indigegogy at Wilfrid Laurier University. She spent the first 20 years of her life living in the bush in a place called Cranberry Lake. The land, she says, is a library of knowledge and taught her so much about life. Her passion for wellness among her peoples and the restoration of Indigenous knowledge in Creation has been one of the driving forces in her life work as an Indigenous holistic practitioner in child welfare, Native mental health, youth justice, education, and community work. Over the last 35 years, her academic and cultural work has been in restoring, reclaiming, re-righting Indigenous history, knowledge, cultural worldviews and making the invisible visible - decolonization. She promotes this through Indigenous research methodologies and published "Kaandossiwin, How we come to know" (2011) and in her recently published 2nd edition (Fernwood Publishing) of Kaandossiwin How We Come to Know (2022). Indigenous re-Search. Currently, Kathy is co-editing another book related to Decolonizing Journeys, forthcoming in 2026. She has authored book chapters, journal articles, multi-media projects and other works in holistic practice, social inclusion, reconciliation, community healing and wellness and Indigenous knowledge.



Keira Smith is Anishinaabekwe from Oshkiibo'kaaning (Seine River First Nation) in Treaty #3 territory. She brings nearly a decade of experience working with families and youth, with professional experience in the domestic violence sector, youth outreach, and child development. Since 2021, she has worked with the Ontario Native Women's Association as an Indigenous Healthy Babies Healthy Children Worker, supporting families through culturally grounded, strengths-based care.

Keira's work is deeply rooted in land-based knowledge, ceremony, and intergenerational teachings. She was raised and guided by her grandmother and great-grandmother—both caregivers and knowledge holders—with her great-grandmother serving as a midwife for their community. Following this lineage, Keira is a certified Indigenous doula, as is her grandmother.

She believes her passion and gift are rooted in traditional child-rearing practices and intergenerational healing, and she is committed to reclaiming and sharing Indigenous approaches to caregiving and parenting.

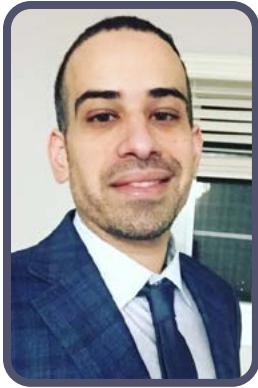


Kylie Moyer is a Community Training Facilitator for the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) and has been with the organization since March 2025. She works with ONWA's Cultural Safety Training, supporting learning that centres Indigenous women's experiences and promotes cultural safe healthcare practices.

Kylie has an Honours Bachelor degree in Behavioural Psychology from St. Lawrence College and a Graduate Diploma in Aging and Health from Queen's University. Kylie has experience working in the healthcare setting, specifically in Long Term Care.

Advocacy matters deeply to Kylie, as Indigenous women face barriers, dismissal, and harm when accessing healthcare. She believes it is important to speak up to help create safer and more respectful care environments.

Kylie was born and raised in Sioux Lookout and is a member of Lac Seul First Nation. She now lives in Prince Edward County where enjoys staying active and exploring new places with her family. Kylie was featured in the She Is Wise Magazine (Fall/Winter 2023) in an article highlighting Indigenous women in sport.



Dr. Manjit Pabla is a researcher and policy analyst with over 15 years of experience developing, delivering, and evaluating community-based research projects and policy initiatives. Manjit's work is grounded in an anti-racism and anti-oppression frameworks and is committed to research that brings meaningful change for Indigenous women, their families and communities.

Manjit is second-generation settler and the son of immigrants from India and the United Kingdom. He currently resides in Mississauga, Ontario, which is part of the Treaty and Traditional Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Huron-Wendat and Wyandot Nations. Manjit graduated with his doctorate in 2020 from the department of sociology at University of Waterloo where his research examined gangs, masculinity, race and culture.

Upon graduating, Manjit found a home working in Indigenous organizations where he went through a process of unlearning and re-learning to ensure his contributions to research centred Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Manjit perspectives, knowledge and experiences are influenced by his own cultural and family teachings, his academic journey, and the teachings and knowledge he received from Indigenous leaders, knowledge keepers and Elders while working at ONWA. Manjit centres his work on empowerment, relationships, and safety and is privileged to stand with his colleagues to ensure research begins with ceremony and recognizes Indigenous women's connection to culture, land and language.



Maria Campbell is a renowned Métis (Cree, French, Scottish) Elder, author, playwright, and filmmaker, celebrated for her seminal 1973 memoir, *Halfbreed*, which documented the systemic racism and poverty faced by Indigenous peoples in Canada, becoming a foundational text in Indigenous literature and inspiring generations of writers. She is a fluent speaker of several languages, a community activist, and a mentor, known for her powerful storytelling that bridges oral traditions with modern media, advocating for Indigenous rights and resilience.



Mariah Abotosswaay is a hobbyist with a passion for Indigenous creativity and Art. Her hobbies and skills include sewing, beading, hand drumming, painting, and dancing. She is a business owner and current Youth Support Worker for Birth Island.

Mariah has been involved with ONWA for many years as a youth representative. She is excited to share her knowledge of crafting and leatherwork.

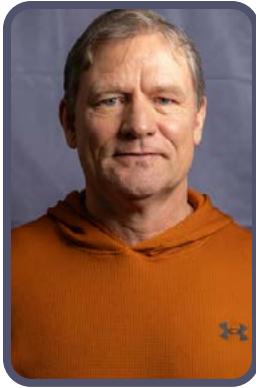


Mary Daoust is originally from a small community in Northwestern Ontario-Sioux Lookout. She is an Ojibway woman and was informed by her relatives that she belongs to the Migizi Clan on her grandmothers' side. Her grandmother originated from White Sand Reserve north of Thunder Bay. Mary's mother was directly impacted by the Residential School system for thirteen years which influenced her life experience with the intergenerational impacts of the Residential School system. The spirit of her ancestors led her to pursue her dreams in supporting Indigenous women and children fleeing domestic abuse and violence with a Native Studies and Addictions background.

Mary joined Minwaashin Lodge in 2005 as a Sexual Abuse Counsellor. Minwaashin Lodge-Indigenous Women's Support Centre provides a range of programs and services to First Nation, Inuit, and Metis women and children who are survivors of domestic and other forms of violence. We also have an Indigenous 25 bed emergency VAW shelter for women and children fleeing violence.

In 2008, Mary transitioned to a management position as the Counselling Team Supervisor. In 2011, Mary continued to step up and take on a leadership role as the Acting /Executive Director until the full retirement of prior ED in 2014. Minwaashin Lodge became a Board member for the Aboriginal Shelters of Ontario in 2012 and remains active.

Mary then made her official transition as the Executive Director in 2014 to present. Since July 13, 2021 Minwaashin has been an active Chapter member with the Ontario Native Women's Organization. Mary is Co-Chair of the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition and she also sits on numerous committees on a Municipal and Provincial level. Her dedication and compassion for the Indigenous community is a asset to all and she will continue to work selflessly along side her strong women colleagues.



Matthew Richer is from Thunder Bay, Ontario, and is the Sexual Violence Awareness Training Coordinator with the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA). For the past five years, Matt has worked in this role delivering sexual violence awareness, prevention, and safety training to Indigenous communities across Ontario, with a focus on supporting the safety and well-being of Indigenous women, girls, and their families. In total, he has more than 25 years of experience working in the area of women's safety and violence prevention.

Matt is also the owner of Leading Edge Gym and brings over 47 years of martial arts experience into his work. He is the founder of the award-winning She Is Strong Program, which empowers Indigenous girls through boxing and self-defense, as well as the Warrior's Path Program. This strength-based initiative supports at-risk youth through movement, mentorship, and personal development. Both programs are trauma-informed, culturally grounded, and designed to build confidence, resilience, and leadership.

Matt's work is rooted in the belief that healing and prevention are strengthened through community, embodied learning, and creating culturally safe spaces where Indigenous women and families feel supported, empowered, and heard.



Miigwan Agawa enjoys learning and practicing beading, as well as other skills such as making hats and moccasins. I am a beginner in beading and new to sewing with hide and furs, and I appreciate learning through experience and community. I am a band member of Batchewana First Nation. I have roots in Fort Hope and was born and raised in Thunder Bay, Ontario. I am currently in school studying to become a social worker, and I hope to bring good energy, respect, and encouragement into every space and connection.



Nadya Kwandibens is Anishinaabe from Animakee Wa Zhing #37 First Nation in northwestern Ontario. She is an award winning portrait and events photographer, an ambassador for Canon, and has travelled extensively across Canada for over 14 years. In 2008 she founded Red Works, a dynamic photography company empowering contemporary Indigenous cultures through photographic series and features. Red Works also provides image-licensing, workshops, and presentations. Her photography has been shown in group and solo exhibitions across Canada and the United States, and Nadya currently hold the position of Photo Laureate for the City of Toronto!



Dr. Patricia McGuire is a professor at Carleton University's School of Social Work. She has worked in direct practice and with post-secondary and Indigenous institutes.

McGuire is Anishinaabe Wiisaakodewikwe. She is affiliated with Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabe, and has community connections at Kiashke Zaaging Anishinaabe. A consistent theme in her work is creating respectful frameworks for including Anishinaabe knowledge(s) in broader academic, social and political contexts.

She completed a master's degree in Sociology at Lakehead University in 2003 and received a PhD in Sociology from the University of Saskatchewan. Her 2013 dissertation was entitled Anishinaabe Giikeedaasiwin – Indigenous knowledge: An Exploration of Resilience. McGuire has written peer-reviewed articles and co-edited First Voices – An Aboriginal Women's Reader. Her research program is in Indigenous knowledge(s), resilience, healing practices, safe spaces and community resurgence, as well as ethical research with Indigenous people.



Rebecca Strong, a singing sensation hailing from the Denesuline First Nation in Stony Rapids, Sk., now calls Prince Albert home. With a lifelong passion for music, she took to the stage at just 5 years old, captivating audiences ever since. While she dazzles at local events, it's her electrifying live performances on TikTok that have garnered widespread acclaim. Notably, Rebecca earned the coveted golden buzzer on Canada's Got Talent. Rebecca was also the third season Winner of Canada's Got Talent, propelling her closer to her dream of becoming a global superstar and representing her culture and country with pride.



Reepa Evic Carleton

In the North, Reepa's work experience included working for ten years as a Housing Manager in Pangnirtung and one year as Community Social Worker in Child Protection.

In 1989, Evic-Carleton moved to Ottawa where she spent seven years working as a Family Support Worker at Tungasuvvingat Inuit, working closely with the shelter CAS Ottawa and sitting on the AIDS Committee of Ottawa. Evic-Carleton also worked at Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, the national representative organization of Inuit women, coordinating activities around the issue of substance abuse. She then co-founded the Mamisarvik Healing Centre, the first Inuit-specific

trauma and addictions treatment centre in Southern Canada. At Mamisarvik, she worked as a therapist and then as the Program Coordinator. In 2017, Evic-Carleton joined the Inuuqatigiit Centre for Inuit Children, Youth, and Families, where she worked as a therapist and facilitated parenting programs and healing circles for mothers.



Elder Renee Thomas-Hill, Cayuga Nation, Bear Clan, is an educator, elder and grandmother living on Six Nations near Brantford. She is a sessional lecturer and Elder-in-Residence at McMaster University. She is a founder of Grandmother's Voice on social media and has also held the role of Cultural Coordinator at the Native Horizons Healing Lodge, which works with addictions at New Credit First Nation. As a Haudenosaunee woman, she is responsible to carry on the teachings of 'Our' Way of Life. "My walk in life, is to share awareness and the uplifting of the spirit through the teachings of Our Mother, the Earth and the Understanding of the Good Mind."



Rhonda Braun is a dedicated Social Worker with over two decades of experience working in various capacities with Indigenous families. A member of the Animiibiigoo Zaagi-igan Anishinaabek First Nation, Braun is from Thunder Bay and has spent her career providing essential services to her community. Currently, Braun serves as a Mental Health Aftercare Worker, where she provides crucial programming and support to community members who have completed the ONWA's Mental Health and Addictions Day treatment Program. Her extensive experience and deep commitment to mental health wellness underscore her vital role in supporting Indigenous families and community initiatives.



Robin Beauclair is an Anishinaabekwe born and raised in Fort William First Nation, a knowledge carrier, and with over 30 years of experience working alongside Indigenous peoples and communities. Her work is grounded in Anishinaabe teachings, traditional knowledge, and a deep relationship with Mother Earth, with a focus on kindness, restoration, and respectful engagement. Robin brings lived experience having worked in restorative justice, to corrections, to policing and back to restorative justice. Now in Indigenous engagement, and community facilitation, creating spaces that are relational, reflective, and rooted in spirit. Through the Sweetgrass Kindness teachings, she invites participants to reconnect with gentleness, accountability, and the power of good relations. Robin currently works for Nokiiwin Tribal Council as the Cultural Oshkaabewis (Helper).



Samantha Doxtator, Haudenosaunee, Oneida - Wolf Clan, is a Personal Development Consultant who specializes in teaching life and employability skills that are grounded by traditional values. Her many years of experience and knowledge help build bridges of new understandings.

Samantha has accepted the gift to continue the work and research on Indigenous Astronomy by her sister Sasha who passed away July of 2021. This presentation blends culture and science in an astonishing way and will change the way you look at the cosmos.

Samantha is the first Indigenous Woman to present at the Hayden Planetarium located at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, and most recently shared knowledge at the Adler Planetarium in Chicago which is the oldest planetarium in the Western Hemisphere.

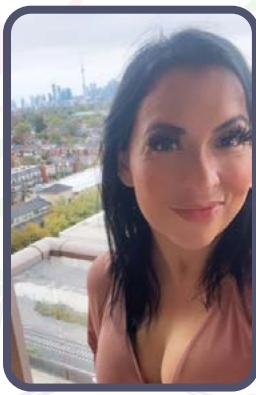
Samantha is currently working on getting her own portable planetarium to share the perspective of

traveling through the stars and has hopes to one day build an Indigenous Science Centre.

The sharing of this knowledge has been referred to as medicine by many communities across Turtle Island, which aligns with Samantha's intentions to nurture intergenerational gifts and brilliance.



Sarah (Sam) McPherson is a Two-Spirit anishinaabekwe from Couchiching First Nation living in Thunder Bay. She is a Research Assistant at the Ontario Native Women's Association, with a primary focus on the Nibwaakaa Inaadiziwin (She is Wise) framework, magazine, and conferences. Sam's experience is grounded in communications and grassroots community arts; through all her practices, she is dedicated to honouring and engaging meaningfully with story through relationship-building, mindfulness, and cultural practice. In her personal life, Sam is an auntie, a sister, an artist and a writer. She lives, artfully and playfully, with her husband Riley, cat Winona, and dog Kubrick.



Sarah Kaukinen is an Indigenous mother of three daughters, and a healthcare professional with over 15 years of experience across hospital, community, and leadership settings. Her work is deeply rooted in a commitment to ensuring her daughters — and future generations — have access to culture, identity, and ways of life that support the reclamation of Indigenous women's power and wellbeing.

Sarah's healthcare background spans inpatient hospital care, community-based work with urban Indigenous populations, women's advocacy, community healthcare nursing, and leadership roles in program development for women, babies, and families. She has worked extensively at the intersection of clinical care, systems change, and community-informed practice.

She currently works with the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA), where she focuses on educating healthcare professionals and advancing culturally safe, equitable care for Indigenous women and their families. Sarah brings both professional expertise and lived experience to her work, grounding education in Indigenous ways of knowing, accountability, and relational care.



Sergeant Tara Singleton is a trailblazer, mentor, and community advocate with more than three decades of service dedicated to protecting, empowering, and uplifting Indigenous youth and communities.

Raised in Onigaming First Nation, Sergeant Singleton's cultural foundation has guided her lifelong commitment to leadership, resilience, and service. Her career has been defined by stepping into spaces where few had gone before and being the first in many roles and situations, opening doors and creating pathways for those who would follow. Her journey began in 1991 with the Canadian Armed Forces, where she developed the discipline, accountability, and leadership skills that shaped her future in public service.

In 1994, she began her policing career with the Sabaskong First Nation Police Service, proudly serving her home community. She later continued her service with the Tsewulton Police Service on Vancouver Island, gaining diverse frontline experience. In 2001, she returned to the Treaty No. 3 territory, where she held several key roles within the Treaty Three Police Service.

Throughout her policing career, Sergeant Singleton consistently broke barriers in leadership and

operational roles. She achieved several firsts within the service and played a pivotal role in youth engagement, prevention, and community-centred policing initiatives. Her leadership helped shape culturally responsive programs that continue to positively impact youth and families today.

Beyond policing, Sergeant Singleton has long been a visible role model and advocate. From a young age, she participated in pageants and modelling, experiences that strengthened her confidence, public speaking, and advocacy skills. Her extensive travels to powwows across North America further deepened her pride in Indigenous identity, culture, and values that she continues to pass on to future generations.

She is widely recognized for her leadership in youth programming, including organizing the Ma'iingan Youth Camp, the All Girls Gathering, and supervising the Youth in Policing Initiative. Each initiative creates safe and empowering spaces where Indigenous youth, particularly young women, can build confidence, leadership, and self-worth. Her advocacy also extends to healing and remembrance through her leadership in the Tree of Hope Ceremony, honouring MMIWG2S+ and fostering community connection and awareness.

Outside of her professional work, Sergeant Singleton is an avid outdoorswoman and competitive angler. She has participated in major bass tournaments, including the Kenora Bass International, Canadian Bass Championship, and the World Police and Fire Games. She also contributes to community governance, having served on the Ne-Chee Friendship Centre Board of Directors and currently serving on the Lake of the Woods District Hospital Board.



Shelby Gagnon is a 2-Spirit Anishinaabe/Cree artist from Aroland First Nation but has lived in Thunder Bay for most of her life. She has been learning and revitalizing the practice of hide tanning in Northwest Ontario, alongside other community members and has attended multiple hide camps including Dechant Centre for Research and Learning. Through involvement with community-engaged organizations and projects involving food sovereignty and security, BIPOC youth advocacy, 2SLGBTQ+ collectives, she uses multi-disciplinary mediums to express and share her holistic feelings. Shelby's work explores individual and collective healing by connecting and living in reciprocity with the Land. By working with youth, activists and other artists, she is dedicated to expanding her knowledge and contemporary take on traditional methods of art, food and healing practices with and for the community.



Silla is an acclaimed Inuit throat-singing duo from Nunavut consisting of Charlotte Qamaniq from Igloolik and Cynthia Pitsiulak from Kimmirut. Since 2005, they've captivated audiences with their raw, hypnotic fusion of traditional katajjaq and contemporary music.

Their name comes from the Inuktitut word Sila – referring to weather, spirit, and intellect – reflecting the deep cultural roots and resilience of Inuit throat singing. Twice nominated for JUNO Awards and honoured with two Summer Solstice Indigenous Music Awards, Silla's work celebrates Inuit excellence: grounded in tradition, yet constantly evolving.

In 2025, they returned with a double album concept: Inua, featuring traditional songs passed down for generations, and Sila is Boss, a bold reimagining that blends electronic, hard rock, spoken word, and post-industrial influences into a contemporary expression of ancient voice.



Stan Wesley, a proud member of Moose Cree First Nation from Moose Factory, is a multi-faceted entrepreneur and a dynamic force in the Indigenous business community. He is the driven Owner and CEO of Shape Shifter Events, the largest Indigenous event audio-visual production and event management company in the country. His entrepreneurial spirit extends to his role as co-owner of Tabahon, a modern revival of an ancient Cree game, and as the owner and hat maker at 1905 Andrew + Patrick, where he crafts distinctive, story-driven hats rooted in legacy and culture.

Currently residing in Six Nations Territory with his wife, Mandy, and their two wonderful children, Maya and Tenona, Stan brings his deep passion for community, culture, and connection into everything he does.

Known for his high-energy, sincere, and engaging professional approach, Stan is considered by many to be one of the most electrifying speakers on the circuit. He is incredibly proud to be back working with ONWA and the She Is Wise program, and is truly honoured to continue supporting and uplifting Indigenous women through this powerful and inspiring initiative.



Stephanie Mikki Adams is a female Inuk from Rankin Inlet Nunavut. Her and her family moved to Ottawa in the Fall of 2018 to work with the Federal Government as a Data Analyst.

Mikki and her Husband Kelly have two living children; Dione (25) and Tia (23), and in 2017 sadly Mikki and Kelly lost their oldest child Billie Jo in an accident.

Mikki Adams received her Management Studies Certificate in 2001 at the Nunavut Arctic College in Rankin Inlet and her Certified Aboriginal Financial Managers designation from AFOA Canada in 2009. From 2005 until 2009 Mikki had entered into a “Mentorship assignment” through the Canadian Executive Search Organization which assisted in enhancing her skills and competencies

that are essential to a Financial Managers position; budgeting, reviewing and implementing new financial processes and systems, strategic planning, methodologies and principals of accounting, time management and human resource issues.

She has been in finance and management for 20+ years. She worked in many levels and sectors such as: municipal (Hamlet of Rankin Inlet), government (Government of Nunavut with the Nunavut Arctic College) and recently at the federal government (Employment and Social Development Canada) until she was hired as the first Inuk Executive Director with Inuuqatigiit Centre for Inuit Children Youth and Families in July of 2019.

Mikki is the Co-Chair Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition, a board member with CASO, Inuit Non-Profit Housing, ONWA, and is a council member with the Indigenous Education Advisory with Ottawa Carleton District School Board.



Suzanne Jackson is a proud Métis woman with over 20 years of dedicated volunteer service supporting Métis women across Ontario. For the past 16 years, I have served on the Board of Directors for Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak, contributing to advocacy, governance, and the advancement of Métis women's voices.

I am currently the President of Daughters of the Fur Trade, an incorporated not-for-profit organization in Ontario and a proud chapter of the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA). I am supported by a strong collective of experienced women with mixed Indigenous heritage. Together, we focus on addressing the needs, rights, and lived realities of self-identified Métis and mixed

Indigenous women in Ontario. Our work centers on advocacy, community engagement, and ensuring Indigenous women's voices are heard at both community and government decision-making tables.

In addition to my advocacy and leadership roles, I have worked as a Labour and Delivery Doula since 2005, providing culturally grounded, compassionate support to women and their partners throughout pregnancy, childbirth, and the birthing journey.

I bring experience, knowledge, and deep passion for Indigenous perspectives, community empowerment, and women's leadership to every opportunity I undertake.



Thi Nguyen is a Data Specialist with the Ontario Native Women's Association, where she supports Indigenous-led research, evaluation, and data governance work grounded in Indigenous women's lived and living realities. Thi approaches her role as one of allyship and responsibility, supporting data practices that advance Indigenous women's self-determination, care, and collective wellbeing.

Thi is a settler with Vietnamese ancestry, living in London, Ontario on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak and Attawandaron. Thi lives with her husband and two cats.



Tina Armstrong is an Elder, Registered Social Worker and cultural practitioner from Anisininew Nation in Northern Ontario. With over 30 years of experience, she has supported Indigenous communities through culturally grounded practice, education and mentorship, including serving as Director of Indigenous Affairs at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. Her work is rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing and focuses on healing, wellbeing and cultural continuity.



Vanessa Brousseau is an Inuk artist, author, educator, and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples advocate and family member. She is registered with Sanikiluaq, Nunavut — a community named after her great-great-grandfather.

Vanessa brings over two decades of experience facilitating workshops rooted in Indigenous teachings, lived experience, and culture-based education. During the non-winter months, she travels across Canada in her awareness motorhome, Rolling Resilience, creating healing, reflection, and advocacy spaces for MMIP families and communities.

She is the founder of Resilient Inuk Creations and a content creator with over 350,000 followers across all social media platforms. Through her art and storytelling, Vanessa shares knowledge, truth, and culture.

As a truth speaker on the ongoing MMIP crisis, Vanessa opens up about the disappearance of her sister, Pamela Holopainen, missing since December 14, 2003, and her own journey of resilience and survival, while shedding light on injustices Indigenous communities face across Turtle Island.

Her workshops are known for their warmth, honesty, and their ability to foster understanding, connection, and collective resilience. In 2025, Vanessa facilitated 23 Red Dress Sealskin workshops across Canada.



Wabanoonkwe is an Anishinaabe from the elk clan registered with the Wabaseemoong Independent Ojibwe Nation, raised in Shoal Lake First Nation, Treaty 3 in Ontario Canada.

I am an experienced entrepreneur passionate about Indigenous empowerment and cultural preservation. Over the past 31 years, I have embarked on diverse ventures, from fashion start-ups to business development and serving as a creative director for editorial photo shoots and fashion shows. Throughout my journey, my focus has always been breathing life into the beauty of being Indigenous.

What sets me apart is my commitment to fostering Indigenous pride and traditionalism. I strive to leave a glorious legacy by showcasing the richness of Anishinaabe culture and empowering others to embrace their heritage, language, and traditions. Through my work, I aim to create a lasting impact on both individuals and communities worldwide.

Whether it's through innovative business strategies, fashion creative directing, or promoting Indigenous visibility, I am driven by the belief that our cultural heritage is a source of strength and inspiration. I am dedicated to sharing the stories and talents of Indigenous people, raising cultural awareness, and fostering diversity and inclusivity while cultivating a realistic approach to sustaining traditional ways.



Zoë Craig-Sparrow is an academic, advocate, and activist deeply committed to advancing the rights of women and girls, Indigenous peoples, and the environment. A member of the Musqueam Indian Band, she was born and raised on her community's reserve in Vancouver, Canada, where she learned the values of matriarchal leadership, stewardship, and intergenerational connection.

From the age of 12, she has been engaged in the fight for equality and justice, including presenting a submission to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child at just 15. Zoë holds a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of British Columbia, a Master's degree in Human Rights (with distinction) from the University of London, and is currently a PhD candidate at the University of London. Her educational background, lived experience as an Indigenous woman and child activist, and expertise in international human rights have shaped her leadership in addressing human rights violations in Canada and beyond.

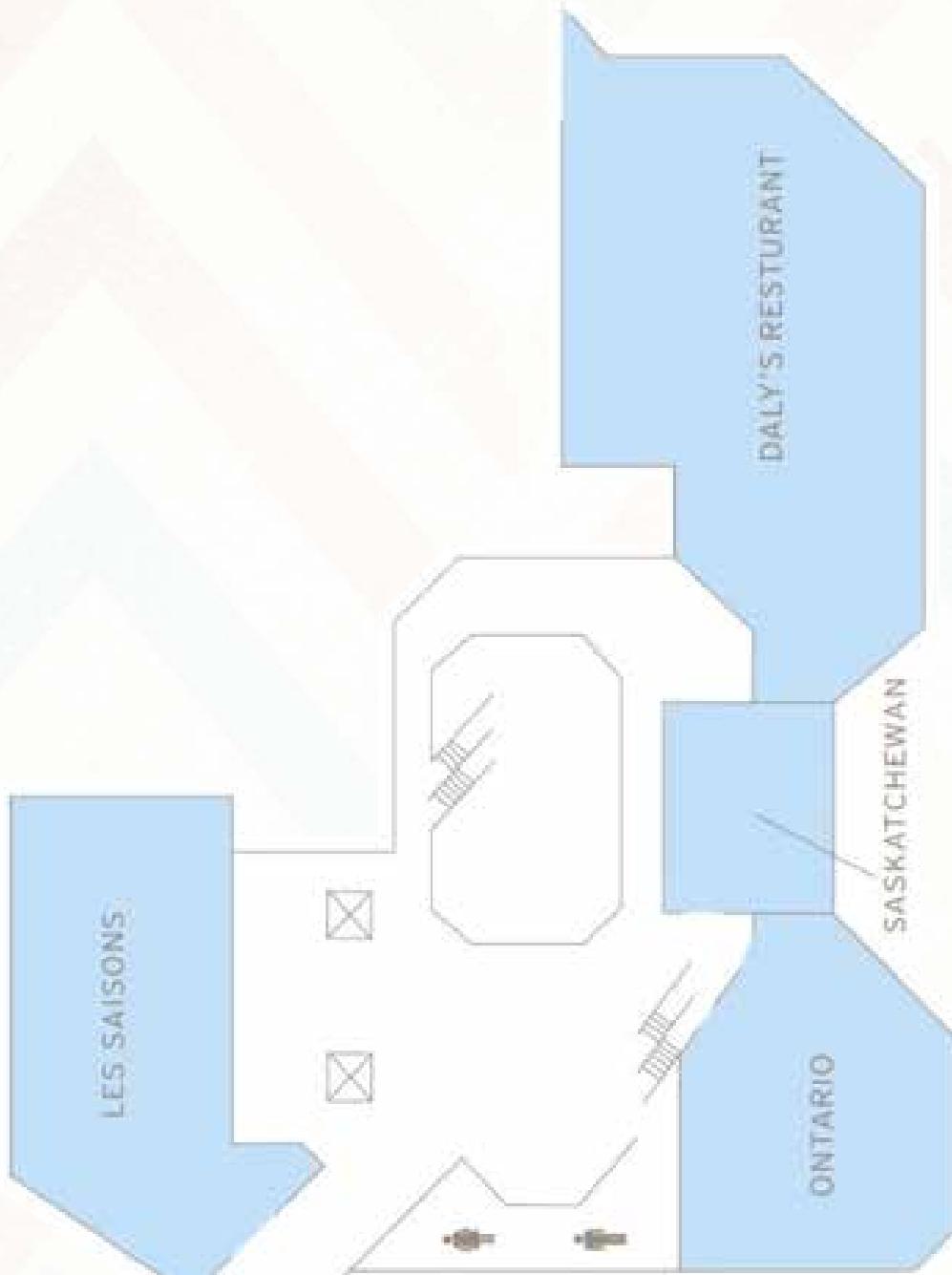
She serves as Vice President at Justice for Girls and sits on the Board of Directors of the David Suzuki Foundation. Her current work focuses on the intersection of environmental degradation, resource extraction, and violence against Indigenous women and girls. Zoë also works with the Indian Act Sex Discrimination Working Group, and is passionate about ending the second generation cutoff and removing sex discrimination from the Indian Act.



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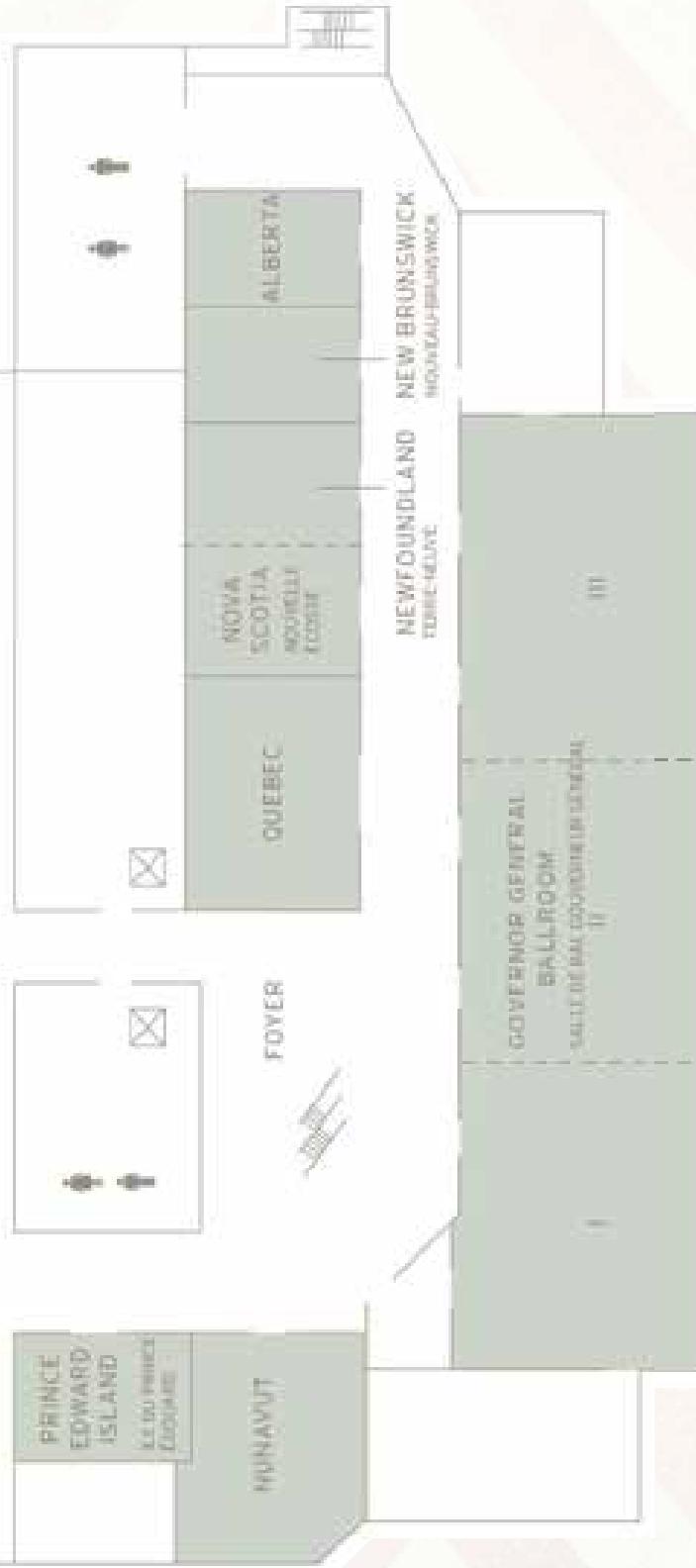
THIRD LEVEL



FOURTH LEVEL



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