

*The Grandfather Teachings help lead a lifestyle in line with
Anishinabek traditions that promote good health 'Bimaadziwin'*

RAISING our spirits



STRONG WOMEN:
May we know them,
may we raise them,
may we be them



RAISING our Spirits

RAISING our Spirits booklet is meant to inform, educate and rejuvenate our spirit. We meet those Anishinabe-Kwe who tell us that self-esteem, love, identity, culture are what feeds ourselves.

In January 2015, the Union of Ontario Indians brought together the Anishinabek Kwe-Wuk Council and Youth to talk about issues facing Indigenous women today, such as racism, poverty and the murdered and missing women crisis in Canada. It is clear, from the participants comments and sentiments below, that Women's traditional roles, positive messages, role models and support are greatly needed in order for women to move forward:

Strength comes from teaching and storytelling

Bonnie Bressette, Kettle and Stony Point First Nation

We need to look after one another

Sandra Albert, Chippewas of the Thames First Nation

Remember Kwe have responsibility for the water

Donna Debassige, M'Chigeeng First Nation

Attend ceremonies for spiritual growth and healing

Elsie Bissaillon, Serpent River First Nation

Traditional teachings and ceremonies involving youth in my community are working

Veronica Waboose, Long Lake #58 First Nation

Women's issues have a direct connection with the land

Lindsay Gray, Aamjiwnaang First Nation

We feel alone

Vanessa Gray, Aamjiwnaang and Summer Bressette, Kettle and Stony Point

CHI-MIIGWETCH

Our contributors who made this booklet possible:

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FACT SHEET: Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women

- Courtesy of the Native Women's Association of Canada

- Most of the cases involve young women and girls.
- Just over half of the cases (55%) involve women and girls under the age of 31, with 17% of women and girls 18 years of age or younger. Only 8% of cases involve women over 45.
- Of the cases where this information is known, the vast majority of women in NWAC's database (88%) were mothers.
- NWAC estimates that more than 440 children have been impacted by the disappearance or murder of their mother.
- The majority of cases occurred in urban areas, but resources are also needed in rural and on-reserve communities.
- Of the cases where this information is known, 70% of the women and girls disappeared from an urban area and 60% were found murdered in an urban area. Only a small number of cases occurred on-reserve (7% of missing cases and 13% of murder cases).
- Nearly half of murder cases in NWAC's database remain unsolved.

*Remember
those who are
lost to us.
May their
spirit
guide them
home.*

Blanket of Hope Project



Maisy Odjick has been missing since September 6, 2008

Laurie McLeod-Shabogesic designed this earring that has been placed
on the Blanket of Hope.



It started with one earring...

 Jody

In January 2015, the Union of Ontario Indians HIV/AIDS Coordinator, Jody Cotter, started a "Blanket of Hope" project. The blanket will have 1,181 earrings – each symbolizing the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women in Canada.

Jody took the blanket with her to the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women roundtable discussions in Ottawa in February 2015.

She says that there is a hummingbird earring placed in the middle by Norma whose sister's remains were found on the Pickton farm in BC.

All the experiences that Jody heard at the

gathering made her realize how strong all of our Women are.

"Women are so powerful and need to realize this and if we are united strategically imagine what we can do," says Jody. "We need to encourage and promote love and respect one another. We need to lead and mentor each other – reach out and give someone a compliment. It can change a person's whole life."



Jody encourages all women to make a vow to help fellow woman.

"By helping each other, it will shift the world into order and the healing can begin."

MAIL EARRINGS TO:
Union of Ontario Indians,
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North Bay, ON, P1B 8J8

For more information
"Blanket of Hope" Project,
contact Jody Cotter
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‘Know who you are and where you came from’

 Cynthia

Dr. Cynthia Wesley-Esquiaux, citizen of the Chippewa of Georgina Island First Nation says “I have some Mohawk thrown in for good measure and a ‘good mind’. My grandmother, a very strong woman, was Mohawk from Kahnawake, Quebec.”

In terms of a strong, Anishinaabe woman, Wesley-Esquiaux is that woman and deserves much recognition for the work she has done. Wesley-Esquiaux has worked in the local, regional and national Canadian Native political field as a treaty

researcher, land claims coordinator, Vice-Chief, government and community advisor and political advocate.

She has written and co-negotiated several Ontario land claims, and has presented papers on historic trauma and Native health. In 2004, she completed her PhD dissertation at the University of Toronto in the Department of Anthology.

Over the past three decades, she has developed insight, compassion, an enduring optimism and a genuine desire to work with Aboriginal people everywhere.

Cynthia Wesley-Esquiaux encourages youth today and says “never forget where you came from, who you are, and walk with your head up. Always think before you act, do what you love, and make people around you happy, and remember every action creates a reaction, so think about what your actions will bring tomorrow. Leave the world a better place for you being here!”

She is an administrator at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, but is also responsible for the Orillia Campus, has seven staff that along with her help to provide all of the background supports and encouragement for Aboriginal students across Lakehead. There are close to 1200 Aboriginal students at the Thunder Bay campus and around 100 at the Orillia campus.





Dr. Cynthia Wesley-Esquiaux

Wisdom

Besides being an administrator, she oversees many programs and services and creative initiatives across the campus and with the City of Thunder Bay. When asked what her definition is of a strong woman is, Wesley-Esquiaux says "My definition of a strong woman is a woman who has confidence in her abilities to get things done.

She works hard, but is gentle with her words and actions, she supports those around her with encouragement and gives them the ability to grow and improve their own skill sets.

"She is never afraid that someone will outdo her in fact she insists they do, and congratulates them on their achievements," says Wesley-Esquiaux. "A strong woman is delighted by life challenges and manages to keep a smile on her face even when things get

tough, and she allows others to shine, the spotlight is not her goal, the better of humanity and those around her is. A strong woman knows a pat on the back is more effective than criticism and goes a long way to provide guidance and support

even when people are difficult to work with. A strong woman knows what hate will do, what anger will do and always asks herself what love could do."

"A strong woman knows will always ask herself what love could do."

She sees herself as this woman.

"I know my strengths and limits and work hard to think before I act. I love others and always remember the pain I experienced and remind myself daily to not visit pain on others. I do not walk with bad memories. I chose to create new and brighter thoughts and daily actions. I believe in a higher power and the gift of kindness and work hard to manifest good in the world."



‘Take care and heal yourself first’

 Nathalie

When it comes to giving advice to fellow youth, 18 year-old Nathalie Memegwanhs Restoule says that every day we should be walking towards and into success.

“I have faced many ‘bumps in the road’ being a youth, but I’ve learned to repair those bumps to keep moving forward,” says Restoule who is Odawa-Ojibwe from Dokis First Nation and has ties to Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory. “Being a youth, I’ve been looked down by older people, and have been told I can’t do things I desire to do because ‘I’m just a kid’. I have overcome these conflicts, and have had great success in achieving my goals, when others have looked down upon me.”

Restoule grew up in Dokis First Nation and is now living in Barrie, enrolled at Georgian College to study Anishinaabemowin language. She has also teamed up with Jordan Mowat of Alderville First Nation to create the singing group ‘Waaban’.

She says that growing up, her biggest role model was my older sister, Paige Restoule.

“Still to this day, she teaches me many teachings about how to walk life in a good way, and she is someone who

will always be there for me no matter what,” says the younger sibling. “As a youth, and having teachings that I have received from people like my sister, this has built me into becoming a strong Anishinaabe woman. As a strong woman, I want to tell other woman to be who you are, and do what you believe is best for you. When you do what’s best for you, that’s when you find yourself. When you discover yourself, you discover the most beautiful person in the world. I always remind myself that, there is no one else in the world like me, and that goes for every other woman in our communities.”

Restoule says that when we recognize our beauty and gifts, we come to find ourselves easily – we come to appreciate ourselves.

“I want to encourage and remind our woman to never forget to take time for yourself, and to always heal yourself before you try and heal others. Once we are healed, our spirit becomes happy and refreshed. When I say ‘success is what you make of it’ it means, whatever you want it to be,” says Restoule. “Being successful is bringing life and meaning to something.”

Restoule, who is also the interim youth

*“be who
you are,
and do
what you
believe is
best for
you”*



Humility

representative for the Anishinabek Nation says that the biggest success that she has seen with our First Nations, is how far we have come as a people.

"From our hardships in the past, we are still here and trying our best to live and carry on a good life for our future

generations. Every day, we continue to walk towards, and into success. Be proud!"

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‘Live each day to the fullest and seize opportunities’

 Chochi

Chochi Knott grew up off-reserve and has now made an effort as an adult to get back to the roots of her culture, traditions and beliefs to find a connection to home.

“I frequently attend organized community events, ceremony, volunteer where I can. I am involved with community sports,” says Knott, 29. “I am a member of the Curve Lake Education committee and when I graduated from University I was employed by Curve Lake First

Nation as an Education Officer for the remainder of the school year. I am proud to be a member of Curve Lake First Nation and continue to strive at being an active community member.”

Knott has been employed by the Union of Ontario Indians since September 2009 and works out of the Curve Lake satellite office as the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Worker for the Southeast and Southwest regions. She brings a dynamic vibe to her workshops

*“Fill your
life with
love”*

LOVE

and makes a connection with the younger moms.

"I think today young women can regain or maintain their identity and self-esteem by nurturing themselves holistically," says Knott. "Making sure that all parts of their being are receiving attention and protection, this being their physical, emotional, spiritual and mental. Life gets very busy and sometimes we lose sight of what is really important. Surrounding yourself with good people that help make you feel special and know who you are so that they can help you grow and consistently be proud of who you are."

Knott says that she's had many influential people in her life who she has gathered teachings from, but her dad has been the most consistent role model for her.

"My dad dropped out of school when he was 14 and worked as hard as he could to achieve what he has in his life and created a safe and nurturing environment for his family so we can achieve anything we put our minds to," she says. "My father has been a single parent to three children and the resiliency he has taught us and determination that no matter what happens in life you have the ability to create whatever happiness and achievements you desire. No one in my family had completed post-secondary education and I am proud to say that because of my upbringing, I was the first to be able to complete University."

Knott's mother gave her the influence to travel and she has two special aunties who have helped her with her spiritual path.

"I have always believed in myself. I have always been an independent person and if I wanted something, I worked my hardest to achieve it. I don't believe in quitting or giving up. Strong goals and positive thinking have always led me to overcome challenges that I have faced along the way. Things can always be worse and it's important to always be grateful for what you have."

She says that she understands how people feel that bad times outweigh the good.

"Fill your life with love and special people that give you all those wonderful experiences that make each day such a gift to have. Laughing is good medicine. Be strong to know when to say no and stick up for what you believe in. Live each day to the fullest and seize any opportunity you can," says Knott. "We never stop learning and experiencing so don't stress about feeling unsure or lost. Everyone is on their own path and that is what makes it the right one. Be yourself and don't be afraid to ask questions and think differently. Always believe in yourself, hold your head up high and be proud of the woman you are."



‘Success is not measured by what other’s think of you’

 Jenny



Jenny Restoule-Mallozzi says that her success in life is not measured by a piece of paper or someone else’s standards – it is being loved and happy.

Having a strong, supportive and loving family along with her community of Dokis First Nation has made her who she is today.

“For me, success is being the best mother, wife, daughter, sister, auntie, friend, and person that I can be,” says the 39 year-old mother of two. “I achieve that success every day.”

“I was very fortunate to be raised in my First Nation where I received a great education, had many wonderful friends, and was surrounded by the land and nature,” says Jenny who is legal counsel for the Union of Ontario Indians. “My days would be spent playing outside; visiting with friends and family, and seeing the people in the community work and come together almost daily whether it was for celebrations, having fish fries, or making crafts.”

Jenny says that identity and self-esteem are essential for everyone to achieve their goals and to be the people they are meant to be.

“I believe that this is realized by learning

who you are through a process of understanding what values are important to you, what your responsibilities are, setting and facing new challenges, learning from your mistakes, and surrounding yourself with people you love and who love you. This is a life-long process that we continuously work towards shaping, defining, and understanding,” says Jenny. “My advice would be that each and every one of us must know that we are beautiful, important, and loved; we all have a purpose. It is essential that we understand that, no matter what challenges we face in life.”

Restoule moved away from Dokis at the age of 18 to attend McMaster University in Hamilton. After she received her undergraduate degree in Political Science, she went on to obtain her law degree at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. Her office is located in Oakville and she provides legal counsel remotely. She still has very strong attachments to her community – her mom is Chief Denise Restoule and father is Councillor Roger Restoule.

“I visit often and it’s important for me to have my children spend as much time as they can there,” says Jenny.

Her biggest life challenge that she has faced was her brother Barry’s suicide.



WE HAVE A PURPOSE

It is essential that we understand that, no matter what challenges we face in life.

"Barry's suicide was a sudden and devastating loss to our family that we are still healing from. I was articling at a large law firm in Toronto when Barry committed suicide. The reaction I faced from the non-First Nation lawyers at the firm, taught me that it was not the place for me and that I needed to work in an environment that accepted me for who I am," explains Jenny.

"We will never overcome Barry's suicide, but his suicide has taught us to value one another, to live each day to the fullest, and has brought us closer to our culture –my family all received our spirit names and clans after Barry's death as part of our ceremonies. I also make sure that I share stories about Barry with my children so that they know their uncle and how special he was. Barry's spirit often visits many of our family members when we need it most."

She balances her work and family life by ensuring that she respects both professional time and personal time.

"My role models were definitely my family, especially my parents," says Jenny. "My parents raised my three siblings and me to be proud of who we are, to treat others with respect and kindness, to study and work hard, and to achieve our goals.

My parents were always working hard and setting good examples for us to ensure that we had a better life. My grandparents Albert and Kathleen Restoule and all my aunties and uncles, who are all successful in their respective fields, were also instrumental in instilling these qualities in me as well. We are a very close family."

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If you need assistance...

Kanawayhitowin: Taking care of each others spirits. Community campaign to prevent women's abuse in the Aboriginal community - www.kanawayhitowin.ca

Ojibway Women's Lodge: Women's shelter - <http://www.ojibwaywomenslodge.ca/>

Anishnaabe Kwewag Gamig: Regional women's shelter - <http://www.akgshelter.com/>

Mississauga First Nation Women's Shelter: Provides a safe home for all women and their children, in any crisis situation; will educate families on the issues and impacts of the cycle of violence; and will promote healthy lifestyles - <http://www.mississauga.com/html/family-resource-centre.html>

Kii Kee Wan Nii Kaan Southwest Healing Lodge: Healing lodge for the recovery of Indigenous family values and structures - <http://www.swrhl.ca/>

Beendigen Inc.: A Native women's crisis home - <http://www.beendigen.com/>

Talk4Healing: Talk4Healing (Aboriginal helpline) is available to all Aboriginal women living in urban, rural and remote communities, both on and off reserve, throughout Northern Ontario - www.Talk4Healing.com

NACAFV: National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence is to reduce family violence in Aboriginal communities by supporting people on the front lines who work diligently to provide safe family environments - www.nacafv.ca

Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres: Is a provincial Aboriginal organization representing the collective interests of member Friendship Centres located in towns and cities across the province - www.ofifc.org

Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses: Is a provincial coalition founded by women's shelter advocates. Membership includes first stage emergency shelters for abused women and their children, second stages housing programs and community-based women's service organizations - <http://www.oaith.ca/>

Assaulted Woman's Helpline: Serves as a free, anonymous and confidential 24-hour crisis telephone line to all women in the province of Ontario - www.awhl.org

True Self Debwewendizwin: Employment and training. Promoting new beginnings and prosperous futures for survivors of domestic abuse - www.trueself.ca

Sisters in Spirit: Works to advance the well-being of Aboriginal women and girls, as well as their families and communities through activism, policy analysis and advocacy. - <http://www.nwac.ca/sisters-spirit>

Neighbours Friends and Families: Education campaign to raise awareness of the signs of woman abuse so that those close to an at-risk woman or an abusive man can help - <http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca/index.php>





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