

The Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network (NAWN)



*Sheila Robinson
Acting President*

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What is NAWN?

- NAWN is a culture-based organization, designed to promote, enhance and encourage the health, social, educational, economic, cultural and political well-being of Aboriginal Women within the Island portion of Newfoundland and Labrador.

How did NAWN come to be?

- During the summer of 2005, a survey of sixty-five of the Aboriginal women from the 9 band councils on the island of Newfoundland revealed that the majority of Aboriginal women did not know a provincial association for Aboriginal women existed.

- Following that survey, a retreat was organized by the Corner Brook Aboriginal Women's Association in September, 2005 at Killdevil Camp and Conference Centre in Lomond, NL.
- The "Lomond Conference" hosted two women from each Mi'kmaq Band on the island of Newfoundland.



- **The Lomond Conference had a two-fold function:**
- a cultural learning experience, and
- to determine a way to resolve the issue of representation for the women.

Based on their discussions, the women determined there was a willingness and a need to elect and establish a Newfoundland Aboriginal women's association.

How was NAWN formed?

- The women elected a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer from the delegates of the Lomond Conference.
- The rest of the board representatives were chosen by formed and forming aboriginal women's groups, on the island of Newfoundland.

NAWN is open to all native women's groups and to all self-identified Aboriginal women on the island.

NAWN Board of Directors (October 2006)

Michele Benoit-Gillette
President

Anne Francis
Gander Bay Women's Group (forming)

Sheila Robinson
Vice President

Leona Cormier
Indian Head First Nations Women's Ass'n

Gertie Mai Muise
Secretary

Vacant
Contact: Anne Hart, President
Melgignat Mi'Kmaq Epit

Patricia Snow
Treasurer

Gwen Campbell
Corner Brook Women's Group

Anne Marie O'Keefe
Benoit's Cove Women's Association

Marie Eastman
Exploits Native Women's Association

Starlyn Thistle
Mi'kmaq First Nation Women's Association

Cynthia White
Flat Bay Women's Group

The women attending the Lomond Conference gave NAWN its mandate:

- To formalize the organization by creating a constitution;
- To motivate the formation of local aboriginal women's groups;
- To submit a letter to the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) requesting recognition as one of the 13 Provincial and Territorial Member Associations (PTMAs) of NWAC, representing Newfoundland.

What has NAWN accomplished to date?

- Received start-up grant (seed funding) from Heritage Canada \$8,000.
- Constitution drafted; will be brought to the membership for ratification at our upcoming Annual General Assembly.



- NAWN has helped with the development of local women's groups, and has a membership of approximately 300 women.



- In October 2006 NAWN held a Strategic Planning workshop for the Board.
- This two-day workshop was facilitated by Mark Felix, Dept. of Industry, Trade and Rural Development.



What Next?



- **November 2006:** received JCP grant to hire a qualified person to assist NAWN's board in getting the organization ready for operations, including:
 - Membership
 - Communications network
 - Organizational policy
 - Infrastructure
 - Options for sustainability.
- Currently working with Heritage Canada to access funds for General Assembly.
- Will continue to encourage the formation and development of local women's groups on the Island.

Questions?



Thank You

'Wela'lin!