



FIRST NATIONS WOMEN'S

REACH

RESTORING ECONOMIC ABUNDANCE AND COMMUNITY HEALTH

2024

CONFERENCE BOOKLET

April 23-25, 2024
Sheraton Toronto Airport Hotel & Conference
Centre, 801 Dixon Road, Toronto ON.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



We are grateful for everyone who has taken the time to join us at this conference and would like to thank all the speakers, presenters and workshop providers for sharing their knowledge and expertise with us, as well as our Elders, Knowledge Keepers and cultural support people for helping us come together and be well.

Thanks to:

Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada; Indigenous Services Canada, Ontario Region; and the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association for their generous support.

Special thanks to:

The Chiefs of Ontario First Nations Women's Council for their guidance and direction in this work; and much gratitude to our First Nations leadership for all of their efforts every day on behalf of our people.

Photo/Video Release:

At the Chiefs of Ontario, we appreciate having photos to use in our publications and presentations. In the past, photos have been used for annual reports, conference summaries, reports, brochures, websites and PowerPoint Presentations.

Please be advised that by registering for the First Nations Women's REACH Conference, you authorize the Chiefs of Ontario with the right to take photographs at the above-identified event.

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Sheraton Toronto Airport Hotel & Conference Centre Floor Plan:



WELCOME

Dear Conference Participants,

Welcome to the First Nations Women's REACH Conference - Restoring Economic Abundance and Community Health.

This event is hosted by the Chiefs of Ontario Women's Initiatives sector under the guidance of the First Nations Women's Council. The First Nations Women's Council was established in 2011 to advise Ontario First Nations leadership on strategies to end violence in First Nations communities. Poverty has long been linked to family violence. In regional discussions related to our missing and murdered loved ones, Ontario First Nations families and survivors identified the need for more measures to restore economic abundance in our communities. They envisioned a network of support for First Nations entrepreneurs including business investments and mentorship. Participants at the 2023 First Nations Women's Leadership Summit also expressed a desire for a network to support First Nations women entrepreneurs. These statements align with Calls for Justice 4.2 and 4.4 from the National Inquiry into MMIWG, calling on governments to support community-based solutions to improve social and economic security led by Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people and more employment and training opportunities.

Our aim for this conference is to provide information, tools and resources to support First Nations women interested in entrepreneurship and economic empowerment. The presentations and workshops are designed to highlight opportunities in growing industries and support First Nations women in overcoming challenges in this journey. We hope you will enjoy the sessions, ask questions and share feedback to help us identify next steps in this work. On behalf of the Chiefs of Ontario Women's Initiatives sector and the First Nations Women's Council, welcome!

First Nations Women's Council:

Elder/Knowledge Keeper: Donna Debassige
DGC Anna Betty Achneepineskum, Nishnawbe Aski Nation
Loretta Sheshequin, Nishnawbe Aski Nation
Rebecca Timms, Anishinabek Nation
Debbie Lipscombe, Grand Council Treaty #3
Sydney Lockwood, Association of Iroquois & Allied Indians
Lyndia Jones, Independent First Nations
Chief JoAnn Swamp, Mohawk Council of Akwesasne
Chief Sarah Diabo, Mohawk Council of Akwesasne
Sandra Montour, Six Nations of the Grand River

Women's Initiatives Sector Staff:

Nancy Johnson, Director
Rebekah Ederer, Research Lead
Katharine Tippeneskum, Sector Coordinator
Sarah Whelan, Policy Analyst
Charlotte Croft, COO Communications Officer

CONFERENCE AGENDA

DAY ONE

7:00 AM

SACRED FIRE
Outside Collingwood Room

9:00 AM

OPENING SONG:
Danielle Migwans

OPENING PRAYER

Chiefs of Ontario Knowledge Keepers: Donna Debassige, Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, and Norma General-Lickers, Six Nations of the Grand River

WELCOMING REMARKS

Ontario Regional Chief Glen Hare and Deputy Grand Chief Anna Betty Achneepineskum, Nishnawbe Aski Nation

BRIEF REMARKS

Director of Women's Initiatives Nancy Johnson, Chiefs of Ontario

9:30 AM

INTRODUCTION OF FACILITATOR
Michele Young-Crook

9:45 AM

PLENARY PRESENTATION:

OPPORTUNITIES IN THE SKILLED TRADES AND TECHNOLOGIES

Bill Couchie, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Initiatives Program Facilitator, Skills Ontario
Bertha Sutherland, Nishnawbe Aski Nation Women's Council

NOTE: INDIVIDUAL SELF-CARE SESSIONS ARE AVAILABLE BY APPOINTMENT AS OF 10 AM (SEE REGISTRATION DESK)

NALOXONE TRAINING COURTESY OF NATIONAL OVERDOSE RESPONSE SERVICE WILL BE AVAILABLE ON SITE: KITS AVAILABLE VIA SIGN UP

DAY ONE CONTINUED:

10:45 AM

BREAK

11:00 AM

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION:

ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A HEALING JOURNEY

Sandi Boucher, Seine River First Nation, Consultant, Author and Speaker

12:00 PM

LUNCH AND VISION BOARDING:
Economic Abundance and Wellbeing

1:00 PM

PLENARY PRESENTATION:

**INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN BUSINESS:
RESOURCES, TOOLS FOR SUCCESS AND INDUSTRIES TO CONSIDER**

Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business -
Angela Mark, Director, Research
Natalie Adams, Director, Supply Change
Summer Jones, Manager, Membership

2:00 PM

BREAK

2:15 PM - 3:45 PM

CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS:

**THE TRAUMA OF
MONEY PART 1:
DISRUPTING OUR
FINANCIAL SHAME,
AVOIDANCE, AND
MONEY TRAUMA**

Jacqueline Jennings,
Entrepreneur Coach,
Start-up Consultant and
Group Facilitator with
Carol Ann Budd, Founder,
Woodland Wealth. Wealth
Advisor, Aligned Capital
Partners

**SUPPORTING
INDIGENOUS WOMEN
ENTREPRENEURS:
MOOKA'AM KWE:
SHE RISES BIZ CAMP**

Mary Margaret Laing,
Business Development
Coordinator and
Elizabeth Verwey,
Business Growth
Advisor, PARO

**FASHION INDUSTRY
JOURNEY AND CRAFT
WORKSHOP**

Tracy Toulouse,
fashion designer,
founder of
Swirling Wind Designs

DAY ONE CONTINUED:

3:45 PM

BREAK

4:00 PM

PLENARY PRESENTATION:

CONFIDENT FIRST IMPRESSIONS: ROCK YOUR JOB INTERVIEW

Joya Mukherjee, Program Manager, Dress for Success Toronto

6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES:

FEATHER BUNDLE WORKSHOP

Dawn lehstoseranón:nha,
Indigenous Arts Collective of Canada
and Pass The Feather

CRYSTAL WORKSHOP

Tawny Mestecanean,
Indigenous Arts Collective of Canada

END OF DAY ONE

DAY TWO

8:45 AM

WELCOME BACK - COFFEE TALK

9:00 AM

PANEL PRESENTATIONS:

**FIRST NATIONS WOMEN IN THE
TECHNICAL FIELD - CAREERS,
WORKFORCE AND BUSINESS
OPPORTUNITIES:**

Melanie Debassige, Executive Director,
and Chelsey Johnson, Communications
Manager, Ontario First Nations
Technical Services Corporation

**CAREERS FOR FIRST NATIONS
WOMEN IN THE FOOD AND
BEVERAGE PROCESSING INDUSTRY:**

Lorraine Pitawanakwat, Indigenous
Outreach and Program Facilitator,
Ontario Native Education Counselling
Association (ONECA)

DAY TWO CONTINUED:

10:00 AM

PLENARY PRESENTATION:

**ECONOMIC GROWTH AND THE WELLBEING OF FIRST NATIONS WOMEN -
RESEARCH, CASE STUDIES**

Sara Wolfe, Institute for Gender and the Economy (GATE),
Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto

10:45 AM

BREAK

11:00 AM

PLENARY PRESENTATION:

COMMUNITY-LED BUSINESS GROWTH: OUR STORIES

Randi Ray, PhD. Founder of Miikana Consulting and Noojimo Health

12:00 PM

LUNCH

Special Guests: Aaniin (Hello) Retail Inc.

1:00 PM

PLENARY PANEL:

**INDIGENOUS WOMEN: INCREASING OUR WELLBEING
THROUGH FINANCIAL SKILLS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Helen Bobiwash, FCPA, CAFM, GCB.D, CCB.D
Magnolia Perron, B.A., M.A, Indigenous Women & Youth Program Manager,
National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association
Ashley LaBelle, Women in Business Coordinator, Nishnawbe Aski Development Fund
Jacklyn Stott, FNWE Business Coach, First Nations Agriculture & Finance Ontario

2:30 PM

BREAK

DAY TWO CONTINUED:

2:45 PM - 4:15 PM

CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS:

THE TRAUMA OF MONEY PART 2: RECREATING WEALTH AND WELLBEING & INTERVENTIONS FOR LATERAL HARM

Jacqueline Jennings, Entrepreneur
Coach, Start-up Consultant and
Group Facilitator with Carol Ann Budd,
Founder, Woodland Wealth. Wealth
Advisor, Aligned Capital Partners

GROWING FIRST NATIONS ECONOMIES - CAPACITY BUILDING

Peggy Domingue, Director of Marketing
and Training, Ontario First Nations
Economic Developers Association
Liz Blazanovic, Meridian Credit Union
Rebecca Atkinson, The Firecircle
Chad Solomon, Biskane

6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

EVENING SOCIAL:

Join us for an evening gathering with finger foods,
traditional drumming, and socializing!

END OF DAY TWO

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DAY THREE

9:00 AM

PLENARY PRESENTATION:

PROMOTING YOUR BUSINESS: ONTARIO FIRST NATIONS BUSINESS DIRECTORY AND SUPPLY CHAIN PROCUREMENT

Arvind Sharma, Sam Abtahi and Jey Pakeerathan,
Chiefs of Ontario Economic Development Sector

9:45 AM - 11:00 AM

CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS:

SAGE INITIATIVE SHARES INDIGENOUS CONCEPTS OF COMMERCE

Sage Lacerte, Founder/CEO,
Sage Initiative

INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP: EMPOWERING AND SUPPORTING OUR CIRCLE

Sandi Boucher, Seine River First Nation,
Consultant, Author and Speaker

DAY THREE CONTINUED:

11:00 AM

PLENARY PRESENTATION:

INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S STRENGTHS AND THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

Lisa-Marie Lavallee, Project Administrator and
Ella Vanderburgt, Indigenous Business Advisor, Indigenous Tourism Ontario

12:00 PM

LUNCH

1:00 PM

PLENARY PRESENTATION:

CHIEFS OF ONTARIO HEALTH HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE

Frances Pine, Project Lead, Chiefs of Ontario Health Human Resources

1:15 PM

WRAP UP:

Three things we will each do
Recommendations to Funders and
First Nations Leadership
Feedback (Evaluation Survey)

2:00 PM

CLOSING PRAYER

END OF DAY THREE

MIIGWECH

-

NIA:WEN

PRESENTATIONS AND BIOS

BILL COUCHIE

My name is William Couchie, but most people call me Bill. I am originally from Nipissing First Nation near North Bay, Ontario and in 2007 I moved to London, Ontario. I have worked at Skills Ontario since 2015 as a First Nation, Metis, Inuit Program Facilitator. My position gives me the chance to educate Indigenous students and adults about the many opportunities and benefits of working in the skilled trades and technology career fields. I get to assist people with the difficult decision of making post-secondary pathway and career choices as well as just introducing them to a whole new career field they may not have known existed.



OPPORTUNITIES IN THE SKILLED TRADES AND TECHNOLOGIES:

Since 1998, we have been delivering our presentation to educate students and adults on the hundreds of career opportunities available in the construction, motive power, service, industrial and technology sectors. During the workshop, youth, unemployed and underemployed attendees, and educators have the opportunity to:

- Discover the benefits of careers in the skilled trades and technologies
- Take a visual tour of the skilled trades and technologies that interest them: with topics such as median salary, description of the role, what qualities, education and training a worker should have; students are encouraged to look for a career that fits their desired lifestyle, personality and interests
- Learn about the steps to apprenticeship, as well as other pathways to a career in the skilled trades
- Find out how to acquire skills and experience
- Understand the importance of employability skills in the workplace and how these skills can easily make or break a job opportunity
- Access further resources and determine how to get started on a path that is right for them

BERTHA SUTHERLAND

Bertha Sutherland is a member of Moose Cree First Nation and has served on the Nishnawbe Aski Nation Women's Council for 3 terms. She served in the Canadian Armed Forces for 15 years as a Mobile Support Equipment Operator, which has taken her from the east to the west coast of Canada as well as 5 years in Europe. She will speak about her experiences and interest in driving various types of vehicles and will share from her perspective that women can be successful in whatever career they choose.



SANDI BOUCHER

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A HEALING JOURNEY

Sandi Boucher started where so many Indigenous women start – a product of poverty and incredibly low self-esteem. But thanks to her 15-year entrepreneurship journey, Sandi is now empowered, outspoken, confident and most of all HAPPY living as her most authentic self. In her keynote, she identifies the “ghosts of Sandi past” she danced with and how she finally left them behind.



INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP: EMPOWERING AND SUPPORTING OUR CIRCLE

Sandi Boucher has said it a hundred times, “If I could wave a magic wand, I would make every Indigenous woman an entrepreneur!” Learn how and why Sandi believes entrepreneurship is the most empowering journey any Indigenous woman can take, how it fits into our teachings and our desired future, how it helps us to heal, and why Sandi believes becoming an entrepreneur was the best decision she ever made!

Sandi Boucher uses Anishinaabe teachings, metaphors, stories, cartoons, her infectious humour, and her undeniable wisdom to build understanding of and respect for the Indigenous peoples she calls family, friends, and colleagues. A proud member of Seine River First Nation in Treaty #3 territory in northern Ontario, Sandi is internationally recognized as an engaging speaker, a traditional knowledge keeper, and a best-selling author. She began her speaking career in 2009 with the launch of her first book “Honorary Indian”. Four books later, Sandi and her team are now laser-focused on healing both sides of the eagle feather she so often refers to. Her audiences include First Nation communities, corporations, small to medium size businesses, municipalities, hospitals, school boards, universities, colleges, and participants at countless conferences and seminars.



CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR ABORIGINAL BUSINESS

INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN BUSINESS: RESOURCES, TOOLS FOR SUCCESS AND INDUSTRIES TO CONSIDER

Join us for an enlightening presentation where we will share the Canadian Council latest research on Indigenous women’s entrepreneurship. Our findings reveal the motivations for pursuing entrepreneurship, definitions of success, challenges and rewards of entrepreneurship, tools and resources for success and industries to consider. Together, let’s explore the opportunities and immense potential of Indigenous women’s entrepreneurship in Ontario and create prosperity, well-being and success for ourselves, our families, and for generations yet to come. It is time.

ANGELA MARK

Angela Mark is Director of Research at CCAB and a proud Anishinaabe-kwe. She has connections to Garden River First Nation through her mother and European ancestry from her father's side. With over 30 years of experience as an entrepreneur, Angela felt compelled to leave her successful career and embark on a new path. Her goal was to integrate her business experience and work towards ensuring that Indigenous Peoples recognize their unique beauty, gifts, and have opportunities to envision, create, and thrive with their own successful businesses. Angela knows firsthand the challenges and rewards of running a business, the sense of pride it instills, the importance of achieving independence and creating a sustainable income for yourself and your family. Angela is thrilled to be part of CCAB and proud to contribute to the success, prosperity and well-being of Indigenous Women Entrepreneurs, their families and communities.



NATALIE ADAMS

Natalie has over 10 years of private and public sector experience. Prior to joining CCAB in 2022, she provided leadership on the development of sustainable procurement practices and policies for the City of Mississauga receiving both the City Manager Award of Excellence and the Sustainable Procurement Leadership Council (SPLC) Outstanding Case Study Award for implementing Sustainable Procurement in the Public Sector. Natalie spent several years working in the private sector where she led the PAR accreditation process, ensured engagement with local Indigenous communities, drove Indigenous spend targets and led the cultural awareness program for a large international construction company. She is a trained Facilitator and Change Manager with a passion for socially conscious procurement, collaborative solutions and fostering relationships.



SUMMER JONES

Summer Jones is the Membership Manager at CCAB and has been with the organization for over 8 years. Summer is of Anishnaabe and European descent and has lived across North America throughout her life but calls Toronto home. Summer works with over 2500 national members connecting both Indigenous and non-Indigenous business members to programs, services, and each other. She is passionate about furthering the advancement of Indigenous participation in Canada's economy and is proud to be involved in the meaningful work CCAB contributes to Canada's journey towards economic reconciliation.



JACQUELINE JENNINGS

THE TRAUMA OF MONEY - PART 1: DISRUPTING OUR FINANCIAL SHAME, AVOIDANCE, AND MONEY TRAUMA:

A presentation covering: Decreasing Shame / Increasing Discernment, Trauma & Scarcity, Reciprocity, The Trauma of Money Method, Window of Resilience, The psychology of scarcity; our money stories, personal reflection questions.

THE TRAUMA OF MONEY - PART 2: RECREATING WEALTH AND WELLBEING & INTERVENTIONS FOR LATERAL HARM:

Money Disorders (Redefined): Financial Avoidance, Financial Soothing, Relational Disruptions, Dopamine, Reimagine Capitalism, personal reflection questions.

Jacqueline Jennings (she/her) is of mixed heritage, Nehiyaw, Anishinaabe, Red River Métis, and of European settler descent and was born in unceded Sk̓w̓x̓wú7mesh lands commonly known as Vancouver, BC. She is an impact investment professional, a decolonial facilitator, and an entrepreneurship educator focused on economic liberation and reconciliation. With a background in the private sector at entrepreneurially driven brands such as Microsoft, Lululemon and Aritzia, Jacqueline has in the last decade coached hundreds of founders and developed multiple startup accelerator programs for historically excluded entrepreneurs. She has led the design of three Canadian accelerators; The Next Big Thing (now League of Innovators), EntrepreNorth and The Fireweed Fellowship. Jacqueline is a mother and amateur farmer. Her family home is on the Sunshine Coast, BC where she lives as a guest on the unceded land of the Sk̓w̓x̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) and is deeply grateful to the relatives who have cared for this land, that cared for them, since time began.



CAROL ANN BUDD

Carol Ann is the owner and principal advisor at Woodland Wealth. Her firm provides clients with financial planning and investment advice. It's a privilege and a responsibility to be trusted with people's financial goals. A proud Sagamok Anishnawbek First Nation member, Carol Ann spends her spare time promoting education, learning Anishinaabemowin and enjoying her camp in Biscotasing. She is co-chair of the Indigenous Council of Queen's University and is the President of the Board of Directors of the Kingston Native Centre and Indigenous Languages Nest. She has recently earned the Trauma of Money professional certification.



MARY MARGARET LAING

SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS: MOOKA'AM KWE: SHE RISES BIZ CAMP

PARO Centre for Women Entrepreneurs is a social enterprise that has supported women successfully for over 25 years in starting and growing their businesses. Our one-to-one business counselling will support you in every aspect as you bring your business dream to reality. PARO offers a BIZCamp that has been created by and for Indigenous women. Mooka'am Kwe is a ten-week program that takes place virtually, every Tuesday. Mooka'am Kwe is also delivered by expert Indigenous speakers, along with some PARO staff. It is designed for Indigenous women who are in the start-up phase of their business journey. We will touch on the topics covered during Mooka'am Kwe, and leave you with details that will enable you and members of your community to register at no cost to them.



Mary Margaret is the Business Development Co-Ordinator for PARO Centre for Women's Enterprise, and makes her home in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Her business experience crosses many sectors including health, financial services and both corporate and not for profit sectors. She has worked on portfolios such as global relief and development, corporate communications, advertising and promotions, and most recently in Operations Management. In this role, she oversaw business planning, marketing, human resources, finance, information technology and administrative functions in the organization. Mary Margaret believes strongly that the economic success of women is critical to the advancement and wellbeing of women in every part of life, both individually and collectively. She is a life-long learner who loves to spend time with her family, dabble in fiber arts, dig around in the garden and go for walks.

ELIZABETH VERWEY

Elizabeth is committed to supporting women in their personal and business growth. She joined PARO in June 2020, after mentoring business owners for over 20 years in Toronto, Ontario. Elizabeth has written two business books and created seven customized mentoring programs. She founded and curated a women's speaker series called 'Spoken Lives' for 7 years. This project is on pause as Elizabeth focuses on her online learning platform called 'Grow at Your Pace'. Check out the courses by experts available on this boutique online learning platform.



TRACY TOULOUSE

Tracy Toulouse is an Anishnaabe (Ojibway) apparel & accessories brand. Proud member of Sagamok Anishnaabek in Northern Ontario, Canada. Tracy's artistic vision incorporates authentic Woodland storytelling motifs with modern clothing design dedicated to quality, comfort, and identifiable style. Tracy's mode infuses applique, leather, fur, antler bone, birchbark, beadwork and ribbonwork. Each design carries the tradition and spirit of the Woodland Indigenous people. As part of cultural reclamation Tracy leads youth empowerment workshops in First Nation communities across Turtle Island.



FASHION INDUSTRY JOURNEY AND CRAFT WORKSHOP:

The "Rise Up Through Empowerment & Fashion" workshop has been helping Indigenous youth raise their self confidence, build on their creative expression, and feel the possibilities in non-traditional careers. Paris, London, U.S and Canada; Tracy has reached many audiences internationally & can always be found popping up at fashion shows, events & tradeshow. Tracy's original line Swirling Wind continues to appeal to a wide market who support the Indigenous spirit including her community favorites Biiskiwaagan fur parkas, collectable purse lines and signature floral work. Tracy's designs reinforce the Indigenous spirit and our connection to the land. Tracy will speak about her journey in the fashion industry while leading a hands-on workshop for participants to make their own leather purses.

JOYA MUKHERJEE

Joya Mukherjee is the Manager, Programs at Dress for Success Toronto. She is a certified community mediator and researcher of alternative dispute resolution in Ontario. She graduated from the School of Oriental and African Studies with a Master of Science in Violence, Conflict and Development and McGill University with a BA in Political Science and International Development and Middle East Studies. She has had the privilege to work in West Africa, the UK, and the USA, strengthening communities through education, research, and start-up initiatives. Joya has a strong track record of working to support women's employment, economic independence, and empowerment through program and event design, building relevant content, and collaborating across industries and communities to create inclusive projects.



CONFIDENT FIRST IMPRESSIONS – ROCK YOUR JOB INTERVIEWS:

Join Dress for Success Toronto's Workshop to feel empowered to be yourself and build your confidence for interviews and beyond. We'll demonstrate with a mock interview what an average and an excellent response to interview questions can look and sound like. Participants will leave our session feeling prepared to develop their own interview prep routine and with increased knowledge on the following:

- Service and Programs DFS Toronto offers.
- How to build your own interview routine.
- Tips for how to respond to interview questions.
- Mock Interview Demonstration

DAWN IEHSTOSERANÓN:NHA

FEATHER BUNDLE WORKSHOP:

Dawn Iehstoseranón:nha (She Keeps/Protects the Feathers), born Mary Francis is Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk), Wakhska:wake (Bear Clan) of St.Regis/Akwesasne Mohawk Territory. Dawn is the founder and president of the Indigenous Arts Collective of Canada, a Canadian registered charity with Heritage Canada designation as a National Arts Service Organization. The IACC is home base for over 450 Indigenous artists and serves to inspire, connect and support each one. She is the facilitator for the Indigenous Women's Arts Conference, the 1st & 2nd National Day of Truth and Reconciliation on Parliament Hill, A United Nations delegate (Matrilineal Order of the Haudenosaunee) and creator of IndigenARTSY.com (a multivendor Indigenous Arts Marketplace). Dawn is a full time volunteer who has dedicated herself to protecting endangered Indigenous art forms, Indigenous women and the next generations of Indigenous peoples. Dawn is the owner of Pass The Feather. She is a Feather Keeper and artist; practicing and sharing traditional bird medicines, books, women's medicine and moon time calendars. Dawn is also a writer, graphic and web designer, passionate about elevating Indigenous voices through teachings, social media, websites, branding and marketing. Dawn will share her feather teachings in this workshop.



TAWNY MESTECANEAN

CRYSTAL WORKSHOP:

Crystals and Natural Stones are a beautiful part of Mother Earth - Each one capable of vibrating in sync with the energy that we hold within our Mind, Body and Spirit as humans. When we keep Crystals and Natural Stones in our personal and energetic spaces, we are allowing the vibrations of the Stones to help heal us. The Spirit Hoop workshop that we will complete together will allow us the opportunity to create a handcrafted bracelet and work with a few amazing Stones that have been used as healing tools and talismans for thousands of years.

The properties of each stone that we will create with is as follows:

Garnet: Garnet has been carried for thousands of years as a protective talisman and is a sacred stone to the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island. It supports the flow of balanced energy throughout the body and is a powerful stone for manifestation, success and strength.

Turquoise: Turquoise is a stone that has been used for thousands of years for grounding and protection. On Turtle Island; turquoise first appeared to be mined and used around 200 B.C. by the Hohokam and Anasazi people. These early Natives mined the famous Cerrillos and Burro Mountains of what is now New Mexico and in Arizona the Kingman turquoise mine and Morenci turquoise mine. Turquoise is the oldest known protection stone and is known to bring strength and a strong connection to the Spirit World.

Pyrite: Pyrite is another stone of Turtle Island that vibrates protection, willpower, mental clarity and ambition. It shields and protects against all forms of negative vibrations, stimulates the intellect and enhances memory. Pyrite is also known to encourage wealth and abundance.



Tawny Mestecanean's Spirit Name is Ozaawaabineskwe. She is a direct descendant of Walpole Island First Nation through both of her biological parents. Tawny comes from Crane Clan and is Chippewa, Blackfoot and Métis. Raised by her Grandparents on a horse ranch in the countryside of a small town north of Tkaronto; Tawny is an Artist who specializes in Traditional and contemporary beadwork and jewelry; using Natural Stones and Crystals in most of the pieces that she creates. In the culture of my Anishinaabe people, we are taught that the Spirit of all things on Mother Earth hold great importance - Including the Spirit of Stones. The Stones have seen the rise and set of Grandmother Moon and Grandfather Sun for all of life's time and as such, they carry the vibrations that Mother Earth and the Universe around us have to offer. As I walk the same ground that my Ancestors once did; I am committed to sharing Art, knowledge and positive, uplifting energy through the work that I do. The Art that I create and the Stones that I use in my work are in honour of my Ancestors and all of our Native Nations who walked the Land long before our current generations arrived here. My Art honours their resistance, their strength and their spiritual powers because without the determination of our Ancestors our Nations would not be here today.

MELANIE DEBASSIGE

FIRST NATIONS WOMEN IN THE TECHNICAL FIELD – CAREERS, WORKFORCE AND BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES:

Melanie Debassige, MBA, ICD.D is an Anishinabek Kwe from the M'Chigeeng First Nation. She currently serves as the Executive Director of the Ontario First Nations Technical Services Corporation. Melanie was appointed to the Ontario Clean Water Agency Board of Directors in October 2013 where she serves as a Board Director and Chair of the First Nations Committee. In March 2018, she was appointed to the Board of Reconciliation Canada where she holds the position of Director/Treasurer. Melanie completed the Director's Education Program at the Rotman School of Management and is a certified corporate director which complements her Master's in Business Administration. Melanie was recognized in 2015 by the Canadian Board Diversity Council in the Diversity 50 which is a list of highly-qualified board candidates. In 2018, Melanie undertook the role as strategic advisor to the National Energy Board of Canada on Indigenous issues. In August 2019, she was appointed to the Board of Directors of the Canada Energy Regulator on August 22, 2023 she was appointed to the role of Vice Chair. In 2019, she was recognized in Canada's Most Powerful Women: Top 100. She also served on the Ontario Provincial Sectoral Audit Committee, Community Services. Most recently she was appointed in January 2023 to the Legal Aid Ontario Board of Directors.



Melanie Debassige, Executive Director, and Chelsey Johnson, Communications Manager, of the Ontario First Nations Technical Services Corporation, delve into the empowering world of First Nations women in technical fields. Discover the diverse career pathways available, from housing inspection to engineering, and gain insights into the challenges facing First Nations communities, including infrastructure gaps and access to resources. Through real-life experiences and statistics, learn how collaboration, education, and advocacy are driving positive change and creating opportunities for First Nations women to thrive in technical occupations.

CHELSEY JOHNSON

Chelsey Johnson (she/her) is Ohkwa:lí (bear) clan, Oniyota'a:ká: (Oneida) from Southern Ontario. She comes from a long line of Oneida women in the matrilineal society of the Haudenosaunee and currently resides in Six Nations of the Grand River First Nation where she grew up. She holds a Combined Honours Bachelor's Degree in Communication and Theatre & Film, as well as a Master of Arts in Communication and New Media from McMaster University. In her current role as the Communications Manager for the Ontario First Nations Technical Services Corporation, Chelsey again executed a complete re-branding strategy for the organization, which has resulted in communications with key stakeholders improving by over 80%. Chelsey manages public relations which resulted in favorable media coverage for the corporation in national outlets such as the Toronto Star, and TVO. In addition to occasionally photographing and emceeing events, in her spare time, Chelsey also enjoys giving back to her community. Since September 2021, she's been providing communications consulting services to the newly established Survivors' Secretariat. The Survivors' Secretariat has been appointed to oversee the Police Task Force in their search for the unmarked burials of Indigenous children on over 600 acres of land associated with the Mohawk Institute.



LORRAINE PITAWANAKWAT

CAREERS FOR FIRST NATIONS WOMEN IN THE FOOD AND BEVERAGE PROCESSING INDUSTRY

The Ontario Native Education Counselling Association is in partnership with Food and Beverage Ontario's CareersNOW program. I am the Indigenous lead for the CareersNOW team, where I connect Indigenous jobseekers and students through outreach and coaching, with great careers and free online training in Ontario's Food and Beverage Processing industry. Indigenous people and especially women are underrepresented in this flourishing industry. I will provide an overview of CareersNOW, the industry, the range and number of jobs and training opportunities available, and highlight examples of First Nations entrepreneurs, their successes, challenges, and growth.



Lorraine Pitawanakwat offers a comprehensive and authentic understanding of Indigenous Community, Culture, Health, and Well-Being. With over 40 years of experience in leadership roles across Education and Training, Social Services, Traditional Health and Wellness programs, she has lived and worked both on and off First Nations in Canada. Through a trauma-informed lens, Lorraine currently contributes her skills as the Indigenous Outreach and Program Facilitator with the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association where she educates, engages, and inspires indigenous youth and job seekers toward careers in the growing Food and Beverage Manufacturing industry in Ontario by motivating their passions to professions or entrepreneurship(s). She seeks to advance and empower women and all indigenous peoples by example and encouragement through economic development partnerships. Proud member of the Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve, Lorraine holds a B.A., B.Ed., and OCT certification from York University.

SARA WOLFE

ECONOMIC GROWTH, GENDER, AND WELLBEING – RESEARCH INSIGHTS AND CASE STUDIES

In this session, the audience will be presented with an overview of some of the key economic issues impacting Indigenous women and gender-diverse peoples in Canada. Audience members will engage in a journey to explore ideas and initiatives to boost First Nations' economic growth and women's entrepreneurship that could impact First Nations wellbeing. It will include relevant case studies, stories and solutions used by other equity-denied women and gender-diverse groups to address challenges and barriers in starting businesses, such as the need for financial literacy, marketing, strategy, and other strengths-based, solutions-oriented approaches.



Sara Wolfe is an independent consultant and established executive leader who works through an equity lens at the intersections of governance, health and wellbeing, and impact. Sara is passionate about driving positive change and uplifting innovation that brings an interdisciplinary blend of design, development, and strategy expertise. Her enterprising leadership contributions cut across health, education, housing, fundraising, and social finance. With a deep understanding of Indigenous communities, grounded in 25 years of midwifery and nursing clinical practice, she is dedicated to creating transformative solutions that drive sustainable development, social equity, and cultural preservation. This includes leveraging her skills and experience to bridge Indigenous knowledge and leadership in all aspects of her work, and in the creation of meaningful opportunities for reconciliation. Sara is mixed Anishnawbe and intergenerational settler, a proud citizen of Brunswick House First Nation in the Nishnawbe Aski Territory, Treaty 9.

RANDI RAY

COMMUNITY-LED BUSINESS GROWTH: OUR STORIES

Using story-telling and engagement from the people attending, Randi will share her educational and professional experience that has been rooted in addressing community needs. Randi's strength based approach to life and leadership will touch on the realities of working in male dominated industries; working with the issues that affect us as First Nations women; the supports that we should be generating for ourselves in leadership roles; and the need to decolonize, identify our own strengths and work with our gifts to build our own solutions within First Nation communities.



Giiwedin Noodin kwe n'dizhinikaaz. Flying Post miinwa Red Rock miinwa, N'swakamok n'doonjibaa. Randi Ray, PhD (c) is a proud Anishinaabe Kwe and founder of Miikana Consulting and Noojimo Health (Canada's first Indigenous-owned Virtual Mental Health Clinic). Randi has a passion and strong commitment to working with people and organizations in order to bridge the social and economic gaps across all sectors for Indigenous people. Randi has experience educationally and professionally in education, business, health and industry sectors as a provincial lead, advocate, strategist, facilitator, researcher and lifelong learner. Randi's motivation is deeply rooted and her passion is to improve overall minobiimadziwin (the goodlife) for First Nations people.

PLENARY PANEL

INDIGENOUS WOMEN - INCREASING OUR WELLBEING THROUGH FINANCIAL SKILLS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Indigenous women are using entrepreneurship to pursue a passion to create a product or service and for greater freedom and flexibility. We are overcoming challenges to build our financial capability and economic wellbeing. Helen Bobiwash has provided accounting services to First Nations for many years. She has conducted research on financial capability and Indigenous women's entrepreneurship. Helen will share her experience on building financial capacity and what she has learned in her research. Magnolia Perron will share tools and programs that are available for Indigenous Women Entrepreneurs through a network of Indigenous Financial Institutions (IFIs) across Canada. Jacklyn Stott and Ashley LaBelle will present valuable insights into the Indigenous Women's Entrepreneurship Programs they deliver and how it can help you start or grow your business.

ABOUT NACCA

NACCA is the umbrella organization for a network of 58 Indigenous Financial Institutions (IFIs) across Canada. Over the last 35 years, the IFI network has provided more than \$3.2 billion to support economic development and the unique and specific needs of 50,000 Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) loans in Indigenous communities all across Canada. NACCA's Board of Directors is 100% Indigenous, and all entrepreneurs supported by our IFI network are members of a First Nation, Métis, or Inuit community.

ABOUT FNAFO

Established in 1984, FNAFO is an Indigenous Financial Institution with offices in London and Stirling, Ontario, dedicated to serving a First Nations membership. FNWE is an initiative aimed at empowering First Nations women to thrive as entrepreneurs.

HELEN BOBIWASH

Helen Bobiwash is an Anishinabe kwe from the Thessalon First Nation and N'Swakamok. She is a proud mom to her 20-year-old son and four bonus daughters. Helen is an independent accountant with over 30 years of experience, specializing in working with First Nations and Indigenous organizations across Ontario. Her focus is on improving financial capacity within Indigenous communities. Having grown up in poverty, Helen understands the impact of financial decisions on one's goals. She is passionate about sharing her financial knowledge with others to help them avoid the mistakes she made. As a Chartered Professional Accountant, Helen was honored as a Fellow of CPA Ontario for her contributions to the profession and community. Helen is committed to supporting the health and well-being of communities. Throughout her career, she has provided accounting services to First Nations, Indigenous not-for-profit corporations, and government departments, assisting with financial reporting, change management, and strategic planning. Recognizing the financial challenges faced by Indigenous peoples due to colonization and limited opportunities, Helen is dedicated to enhancing Indigenous financial wellness. She has conducted research on Indigenous financial wellness in Canada and authored financial capability workbooks for Indigenous women entrepreneurs.



MAGNOLIA PERRON

Magnolia Perron is the Indigenous Women and Youth Program Manager at the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association (NACCA). She holds a Graduate Diploma in Indigenous Policy and Administration from Carleton University and a Masters in Indigenous Nationhood at the University of Victoria where she focused on entrepreneurship and economic development in Indigenous communities. Magnolia has experience in advocacy, research, policy, and program development and has worked with many Indigenous non-profit organizations including the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCAAFC) and the First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC). Magnolia is from Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory and a proud member of the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte.



ASHLEY LABELLE

Ashley, from Ginoogaming First Nation, dedicates herself to empowering Indigenous communities, especially women, for prosperity. As the Women in Business Coordinator at NADF, she fosters collaboration, aiding Indigenous women in navigating their path to success despite unique challenges. Additionally, Ashley serves as a board member for Ginoogaming First Nations Child and Welfare, advocating for the well-being of Indigenous children. She focuses on supporting Indigenous women in overcoming entrepreneurship barriers, providing mentorship, guidance, and advocacy. Ashley's dedication to the empowerment of Indigenous communities, especially women and children, shines through her work, inspiring positive change, and a brighter future.

JACKLYN STOTT

Jacklyn Stott is an experienced professional dedicated to empowering entrepreneurs. With over a decade of experience in Economic Development and Small Business Assistance, she joined First Nations Agriculture & Finance Ontario (FNAFO) in August 2022 as FNWE Business Coach. Prior to FNAFO, Jacklyn managed two successful part-time businesses while working in economic development roles. Her expertise and commitment to fostering economic growth and empowerment have made her an advocate in her field. Through mentorship and guidance, Jacklyn continues to make a positive impact on aspiring entrepreneurs, driving change and prosperity for First Nations women.



PEGGY DOMINGUE

GROWING FIRST NATIONS ECONOMIES - CAPACITY BUILDING

Peggy's journey is truly inspiring, reflecting resilience, determination, and a deep commitment to both personal and community development. Her extensive experience across various roles within the Chapleau Cree First Nation (CCFN) underscored her dedication and adaptability. Her educational achievements, attained while juggling the responsibilities of family and full-time employment, highlight her exceptional time management skills and unwavering focus.

Her professional credentials reflect her dedication to acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge to serve her community effectively. Peggy's commitment to ongoing education in the economic development field further emphasizes her proactive approach to addressing the evolving needs of her community.



Beyond her professional accomplishments, Peggy's identity as a proud Indigenous woman, wife, mother, and grandmother underscores her deep-rooted connection to her community and culture. Her involvement in community wellness and economic growth initiatives speaks volumes about her commitment to making a positive impact on the lives of those around her. Throughout her journey, Peggy has consistently upheld values such as integrity, honesty, empathy, and leadership, which have undoubtedly contributed to her success and earned her the respect of her peers and community members alike. Her belief in collaboration and her positive "can do" attitude are invaluable assets that will undoubtedly continue to drive positive change within the organization. Furthermore, Peggy's commitment to maintaining a healthy work-life balance serves as a testament to her understanding of the importance of holistic well-being, not only for herself but also for those she serves and interacts with daily.

LIZ BLAZANOVIC

Liz Blazanovic's work experience includes serving as the Vice President Business Banking at Meridian Credit Union since November 2020. Prior to that, they were the Regional Vice President - Toronto at Meridian Credit Union from April 2020 to November 2022. Before joining Meridian Credit Union, Liz worked at Scotiabank, where they held various roles. Liz served as the Director & Group Lead from May 2017 to March 2020, Director - Canadian Commercial Credit from September 2016 to May 2017, Director & Group Lead from February 2013 to August 2016, and Marketing Manager - Scotia Leasing from February 2011 to February 2013. Liz Blazanovic holds a Master's Degree in MBA from Queen's University and a Bachelor's Degree in Economics from the University of Manitoba.



REBECCA ATKINSON

Rebecca Atkinson, a mentor with The Firecircle, hailing from the rural Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia. Armed with a Business Degree in Tourism Management, with a special focus on Food and Beverage, Rebecca became an entrepreneur herself in a highly seasonal and tourism-dependent region. In the span of seven years, Rebecca transformed her business into a community beacon. Through strategic partnerships and collaborations, she not only weathered the seasonal storms but also established a truly community-based business that thrived on shared success. Rebecca's flame burns bright for sustainable tourism. Her belief in the power of collaboration to achieve sustainability echoes through her entrepreneurial journey. For her, entrepreneurs working together can create a ripple effect of growth, happiness, and economic benefits in rural areas.



CHAD SOLOMON

Chad is a member of the Aanishinaabe community of Henvey Inlet First Nation in Ontario, Canada. His Indigenous publishing and entertainment company, Little Spirit Bear Productions, has published 54 titles and produced more than 3,000 performances of 13 original shows since 2005. In 2020, Chad launched the Biskane platform to connect Indigenous artists with merchants and customers.

After over 15 years of travelling more than 1,000,000 kilometres and performing more than 3,000 shows across Canada and the United States, Chad is now embarking on a new venture—an Indigenous art ecosystem called Biskane.com. Launched in 2022, Biskane is a holistic digital ecosystem: a single port of call for art merchants and consumers to acquire verified Indigenous art.



SAGE LACERTE

SAGE INITIATIVE SHARES INDIGENOUS CONCEPTS OF COMMERCE

Sage Lacerte, Founder of Sage Initiative, Canada's first Indigenous Womxns impact investment collective shares her experience of building her business, critical insights on Indigenous concepts of commerce and rematriating economies. Want to know how to grow your money and why money talk feels so challenging and complex for us as Indigenous people? We will learn a few tips and frameworks that help.



SHadih Sage Lacerte Sahdnee. Loretta Madam S`loo, Paul Lacerte S`ba. Tebee Snaychalya Lekwungen keloh. Sigh gunna Lushiboo injanyinkak dene. Sage Lacerte is Carrier from the Lake Babine Nation and has served as the Founder and CEO of the Sage Initiative since 2019. Between 2018-2021, Sage has served as the National Youth Ambassador of the Moose Hide Campaign – a grass roots movement of Indigenous and non-Indigenous men and boys that works to end violence against women and children in Canada, with a particular focus on post-secondary initiatives. Sage holds a degree from the University of Victoria in Gender Studies and has been informed by Indigenous knowledge from all her relations across Turtle Island and beyond. This year she became certified as a BIPOC birthworker and doula.

ELLA VANDERBURGT

INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S STRENGTHS AND THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

Ella Vanderburgt and Lisa Marie Lavellee will discuss individual strengths, gifts, and roles within all of Creation while honouring Indigenous Women. We hope to create a supportive space for openness and honesty to enable an inward contemplation of the gifts, purpose, values, and goals you have to offer. Our goal is to introduce innovative Indigenous tourism ideas that help inspire and motivate women as they embark on and move forward in their journey.



Ella Vanderburgt is a consultant committed to supporting you in all aspects of business development. With over 20 years' experience creating, managing, and delivering programs which provide advice at all stages of small to medium business growth.

A successful business entrepreneur who understands the varied challenges of owning a business. She is an expert in coaching and agile at developing efficiencies within financial and accounting systems, tax, retention, and sustainability. In addition, Ella is a certified business coach by Business Retention + Expansion International and the Building Enterprising and Vibrant Communities and Local Economies through Asset Based Community Development course.

Expertise: Small business development, financial and accounting system development.

LISA MARIE LAVALLEE

Lisa Marie Lavallee is Anishinabe originally from the Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory on Manitoulin Island. She was born and raised in Toronto, until her Family relocated to Southern Alberta for several years. She now resides in the Greater Sudbury-Manitoulin Area. Lisa Marie attended Cambrian College's Tourism and Travel program. Upon graduating she began working within the Hospitality Industry with IHG's Holiday Inn and most recently Hilton's Homewood Suites. Lisa Marie has grown up on the Pow-Wow Trail. As a Jingle Dress dancer, she has traveled across Turtle Island to attend Pow-Wows and gatherings. Her dancing has also allowed her to travel internationally to present the Anishinaabe Jingle Dress and her culture. Lisa Marie has a deep passion for cultural exchanges. With a love for traveling to other regions to learn and experience culture, language, cuisine and seeing sites, she has the same love for sharing the same from her Region with others from around the World.



"Entrepreneurship is the greatest healing journey an Indigenous woman can go on."

– Sandi Boucher, Seine River First Nation, Consultant, Author and Speaker

MENTAL WELLNESS AND CRISIS SUPPORT RESOURCES

9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline - Call or text 9-8-8.

- If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, call or text 9-8-8. Help is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- They offer support that is bilingual, trauma-informed, culturally appropriate, and available anywhere in Canada.

Hope for Wellness - 24/7 toll-free Helpline at 1-855-242-3310, or connect to the online chat at www.hopeforwellness.ca.

- The Hope for Wellness Help Line offers immediate mental health counseling and crisis intervention to all Indigenous peoples across Canada. Service is available in Cree, Ojibway, Inuktitut, English and French. Callers may ask about the availability of services in the language of their choice.

Indian Residential School Survivor Crisis Line - 24/7 Toll-Free, 1-866-925-4419

- A national service for anyone experiencing pain or distress as a result of their residential school experience.

Indian Residential School Survivors Society (IRSSS), Toll-Free 1-800-721-0066

Kids Help Phone - 1-800-668-6868 (24/7 and toll-free) or text CONNECT to 686868.

- For youth and young adults aged 5 to 29 who want confidential and anonymous care from trained responders.

LGBT YouthLine - Text: 4 PM – 9:30 PM, at 647-694-4275. Chat: 4 PM – 9:30 PM at <https://www.youthline.ca/>

- YouthLine offers confidential and non-judgmental peer support through our text and chat services. Get in touch with a peer support volunteer from Sunday to Friday, 4:00PM to 9:30 PM.

Talk Suicide Canada - 24/7 Toll-free 1 (833) 456-4566 or text 45645 4pm-midnight.

- Talk Suicide Canada (formerly known as Crisis Services Canada) is a collaboration of distress and crisis centres from across Canada, offering Canada's first nationally available, regionally delivered suicide prevention service.

Toronto Distress Centres: 416 408-4357 or 408-HELP

- A service agency dedicated to providing timely emotional support, crisis intervention, and suicide prevention to people in distress.

Please call 911 if you or someone you know is in immediate danger or needs urgent medical care.

FIRST NATIONS WOMEN'S

REACH

RESTORING ECONOMIC ABUNDANCE AND COMMUNITY HEALTH

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