



The New FemNorthNet Logo

by [Deborah Chansonneuve](#)

Flying geese are an enduring image common to all four Northern communities of FemNorthNet. For some First Nations, geese in flight are a model for team leadership that speaks to Indigenous core values of caring, sharing, and collaboration. When geese are flying together in a V-formation, their range of flight is over 70% greater than when one is flying alone. The goose at the front of the V bears the full brunt of the wind so those flying behind honk loudly in encouragement and support. When the lead goose becomes tired, she falls back to the end of a line and another goose moves into the lead position. If a goose becomes unable to fly due to exhaustion or illness, two other geese land with her and keep her company until she is either able to fly once again or dies. No one is left behind.

All of the Northern communities in the Network are located near water. The colour blue of the logo honours women's role as Keepers of the Water. Human life begins in the water of women's wombs so women and water have a sacred relationship and a sacred trust. The waters of the womb that sustain new life are only as healthy as the rivers and waters of the earth; a primary consideration in life-sustaining economic development.

The woman who created our new logo is [Nathalie Coutou](#), a multi-talented artist who owns the Khewa Gallery in Wakefield, Quebec. Nathalie is proud of her Native heritage and passionately promotes other Indigenous artists while also promoting business skills for women. She is the founder of the Wakefield Harvest Festival, an annual intercultural learning and social event that celebrates community and the beauty and richness of the fall season.

This logo design was chosen unanimously by members of the Northern Caucus of the Network who represent the four communities of Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador West, Thompson, Manitoba and La Loche, Saskatchewan and by our FemNorthNet representative from the DisAbled Women's Network.

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FemNorthNet Community Leaders

by Deborah Chansonneuve

Each of the women from FemNorthNet's community partner organizations are inspiring, accomplished leaders! [Georgina Jolibois](#) and [Brenda Janvier](#) are the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of the mostly Dene community of La Loche. Theirs is the second largest and fastest growing community in Saskatchewan's north.

In Thompson, the third largest city in Manitoba with an Aboriginal population of 36%, Dawn Sands heads the Thompson Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation (TNRC), a vibrant, active organization with a central role in essential community programs and services. [Charlene Lafreniere](#), a Thompson City Councillor has been the driving force behind initiatives in education, housing, safety and the Thompson Aboriginal Accord. In Eastern Canada, [Noreen Careen](#), Executive Director of the Labrador West Status of Women Council is leading the way to tackle enormous social and infrastructure changes in her community of 7000+ as a result of the recent economic boom there. And in Happy Valley - Goose Bay, [Petrina Beals](#), Executive Director and [Denise Cole](#) of the Mokami Status of Women Council have taken the lead on issues from violence against women to housing. Most recently, they have successfully mobilized their community to address impacts of the proposed new hydroelectric dam at Muskrat Falls.

FemNorthNet newsletters to follow will feature leadership stories from each of these community partners as they carry out plans to increase women's involvement as leaders and decision makers in their communities.

In this edition of the FemNorthNet newsletter we are featuring the story of [Daisy Monias](#) from Norway House in Northern Manitoba. Daisy came to the attention of FemNorthNet through the success of her efforts to empower women in her community by reclaiming traditional practices of talking and healing circles. Although each of the communities involved with FemNorthNet is completely unique, what is shared is their deeply rooted pride in their cultures and to Northern solutions for Northern issues.

Northern Stories of Women and Leadership

By Daisy Monias

The following story shared by Daisy Monias during our July Blueprints meeting, illustrates the geese teachings of shared leadership and collective strength.

Daisy's Story, Norway House, Manitoba

"The work to strengthen women and heal our communities is sacred work; it is not a 'project' or a 'model. Traditionally women are the foundation of community: the vision of this work is to reclaim our young women so they grow up to be strong women."

Daisy Monias



Daisy, Isobel and dancer at Women's Worlds 2011

The Norway House Community

Norway House, located in northern Manitoba is more than 95 percent Native. Although there was a high loss of culture due to residential schooling, the community is working together to restore and reintroduce sacred ceremonies which are starting to become part of community life. The next step is reclaiming the Cree language so children and youth can learn from this generation of seniors in their lifetime.

The Jack River School

At the Jack River School where Daisy is Principal, there are 420 students from Nursery age to Grade 6; of these approximately 53 students have some type of diagnosed disability. The school provides access to a psychologist, a physiotherapist, occupational therapist and speech therapist.

When students with disabilities reach the age of 21 these services are no longer available to them. With no supports or activities to occupy them in the community they are forced to become home-bound. Jurisdictional battles over which level of government will pay for services for children with complex disabilities are also a continuing problem. One well-known example is the case of Jordan Anderson, an infant with complex needs hospitalized in Winnipeg who eventually died there, away from his family and his community while governments fought over who should pay. In response to this tragedy, Child and Family Services and the Chief and Council of Norway House advocated for policy changes which became "Jordan's Principle" ensuring children with complex needs receive health services without waiting for jurisdictional funding decisions. The situation remains that parents have to give up custody of their children in order to access support services. This is a modern repeat of residential schooling where the system requires families to give up their children in order to receive services; the stress on families is overwhelming.

Intergenerational Impacts of Residential Schooling

The community used to be based on an extended family model. Daisy's story is an example of this: she was raised by her mother and her grandparents who provided the foundational teachings of her childhood. Because Daisy's grandparents had both been to residential school, they resisted sending Daisy's mother to school. Although they wanted to protect her she missed out on the benefits of education, especially literacy skills.

Children who were raised in the isolated, institutional environments of residential schools had virtually no experience of family life. This created parenting challenges when those children became adults that have been passed from generation to generation.

Healing Through Sharing Circles

Part of Daisy's healing journey was learning about the 7 Sacred Teachings. The Sharing Circles grew out of wanting to share these beautiful teachings with her family and community. The circles have naturally evolved into a support group where women discuss issues of concern to them and what they want to celebrate. After about 2 years the women started to integrate ceremony such as feasts, drumming, story telling, pipe, and water ceremonies.

7 Sacred Teachings:

Respect

Humility

Wisdom

Love

Courage

Honesty

Truth

"The circles have naturally evolved into a support group where women discuss issues of concern to them and what they want to celebrate."

There are now 2 Sharing Circles each month with about 36 women and youth attending at one time or another: one is a full-moon ceremony and the other is a sharing circle.

Men have chosen to support the women by providing wood for the fires in their traditional role as Fire Keepers, and coming to the feast afterwards and to some or part of the ceremonies. Men also share their stories and dreams relating to what the women are doing in the circles. Sometimes the men and women come together for pipe ceremonies and feasts to bless an activity in the community or school.

The circle process adjusts to needs of the community. When a youth feels they need support, they can call a healing circle. For this process the circle changes and becomes more flexible in order to better support that person. People can jump in with a comment or a suggestion or to ask a question if needed, without having to wait for their turn to speak. Then there is a traditional closing where everyone has an opportunity to respond.

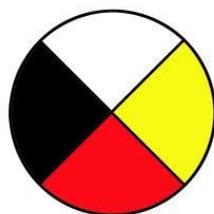
The circle provides safety for girls to discuss sensitive issues such as menstruation in a small group setting. Girls' self-confidence has increased by using the circle to teach about issues such as relationships and menstruation, which includes a feast to celebrate the onset of menses and the capacity to give life. Boys also receive teachings from men about the importance of respect for women and girls and for themselves.

According to Daisy, the purpose of the circles is to strengthen women's confidence in themselves and also to support each other through shared leadership, encouragement and respect. The community benefits from the growth and inner strength of the women. She believes that by restoring the Seven Sacred Teachings as the foundation and using the Circle as the process, leadership is modeled in "a good, supportive way".

Leadership Development as Illustrated by Daisy's Story

Revitalizing traditional Teachings is the foundation for a better life, including better education and employment outcomes. Women coming together supported by the men and learning about the beauty and wisdom of their cultural Teachings is a traditional process. Within the sharing circle, everyone participates equally and everyone's voice is heard respectfully. The purpose of the circle is to build inner strength, individually as well as collectively. Ceremony reinforces that learning and growth is a sacred process. Daisy's goal is to keep 'growing' the circles from 36 participants to 100.

Daisy believes the work we are doing today will impact on the next generations and that "our personal growth will be instilled in these children who are yet to come". We are 'growing' a process of undoing the damage of the past for the good of our grandchildren and great grandchildren. Each of us carries the good qualities that are the legacy of our ancestors; and we are starting to remember and reclaim their gifts to us.



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FemNorthNet Update

By [Jane Stinson](#)

Outreach & Promotion

We spread the word about the FemNorthNet project through a series of conferences during spring and early summer 2011. Presentations were made at the:

- Community-University Expo conference at Wilfrid Laurier University in May, (Going Beyond Inclusion: the Advantages and Challenges of Community-led Community-University research alliances),
- Canadian Women's Studies Association in Fredericton in June (The Downside of Up in Community Transformations in Labrador-Global and national implications) and
- Women's Worlds conference in Ottawa in early July (panel presentation on Breaking Ground for Women in Canada's North: The FemNorthNet Project).

Developing Women's Leadership in Northern Communities

CRIAW's innovative new project to Develop Women's Leadership in Northern Communities got underway this summer with a bang when women leaders from five northern communities joined with their Southern project partners for a 2-day meeting in Ottawa. The purpose of the event was to network between the communities and develop their action plans for the next two years. This project is funded by Status of Women Canada through its Blueprints theme to promote women's leadership and democratic participation.



From Right to Left

Top Row: Deborah, Denise, Jane, Colin, Charlene, Noreen, Daisy. Middle Row: Deborah, Gail, Judy. Bottom Row: Petrina, Carmela, Georgina

This dedicated, diverse group of 15 women spoke frankly about the challenges of working together over distance and other differences. They emphasized the need to “northernize” the project and suggested 13 recommendations to better meet the specific needs and approaches of their northern communities. We shared inspiring stories of women's leadership in the North, feasted on local First Nations cuisine and brainstormed unique action plans suited to each community that will strengthen women's leadership there. Each community will implement its own distinct strategy to recruit and engage a diverse group of women in activities designed to develop their leadership skills through training opportunities and working with local mentors.

Their experiences will be evaluated and the results will be published at the end of this 2-year project in a final CRIAW report on Developing Women's Leadership in Northern Communities.

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Developing Research and Action Plans

Over the summer and into the fall the community research teams are developing their research and action plans for the FemNorthNet Community-University Research Alliance project. The Status of Women Canada project on developing women's leadership complements and extends the work that was started through CRIAW's CURA grant on Learning from Women's experiences of community transformations as a result of economic restructuring. It provides more resources to our community partners to engage and support women in developing leadership and taking action to address the changes going on in their community and the need to have women's diverse needs taken into account in local economic development plans.

Influencing the Muskrat Falls Hydro development plans in Happy Valley – Goose Bay: A case in point

We're happy to report that FemNorthNet made an impact on the Environmental Assessment hearings into the hydro-electric development planned for Muskrat Falls just outside of Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador. Members of the network came together to develop an initial and final submission for our community partner, Mokami Status of Women, to the EA panel when it was conducting its hearings in HV-GB this spring. We were ready to respond when the Environmental Assessment panel issues its report in September. And we were pleased to see the panel recognized there would be adverse effects on the local community and that it would be most serious for women and children. To deal with the negative effects on the local community the Panel recommended that the provincial health and social services department provide human resources to address the increased demands, that a Capacity agreement be developed with the community to establish baseline data on infrastructure capacity, and the need for social housing. They also supported our call for a participatory research element to engage the community to identify the social needs and develop recommendations to address or prevent them. They also supported our call for a moratorium on development, by calling for further study into alternatives before proceeding.

The EA panel recommendations are non-binding and the Dunderdale government just re-elected in NL has indicated its support for this development. So we'll continue to need to press for the implementation of these recommendations.

You can read more about what FemNorthNet is up to on the CRIAW web site at <http://www.criaw-icref.ca/femnorthnet>

Why a Moratorium on Muskrat Falls is Needed

By Petrina Beals

Published September 24th 2011, The Telegram (St. John's)

As the provincial election heats up, so too does the debate about whether the hydroelectric development of Muskrat Falls is a good deal for people in this province. One of the main criticisms leveled at the new hydro-electric generating station at Muskrat Falls in Labrador is that it will not lower energy costs for people in the province, yet Nova Scotians will get the power for half the price.

Happy Valley-Goose Bay



Labrador West



La Loche



Thompson



If you want to talk about who will pay the cost for this development, let's talk about the impact it will have on the local community of Happy Valley–Goose Bay, the nearest community to Muskrat Falls on the Lower Churchill River where it opens into Melville Lake before flowing into the Atlantic Ocean.

Provincial crown corporation Nalcor surprisingly claimed there would be no long-term socio economic impacts from its economic development on the community of Happy Valley Goose Bay in its Environmental Impact statement to the federal-provincial environmental assessment panel last April. How could that be when an estimated 5,000 mainly male workers will move into our town of 7,500 to build the dam over 5 years?

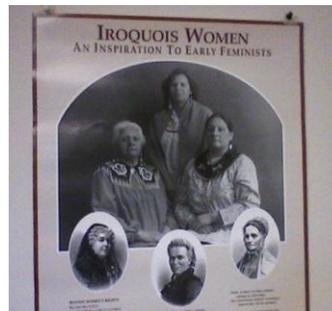
Nor should we overlook the fact that our community is already struggling with violence against women, a severe shortage of affordable housing and childcare, and growing poverty, mental health, addictions and substance use issues. The research, we presented to the panel showed this kind of large-scale development means we can expect other problems to develop, problems we are not going to be able to respond to effectively given our current situation of limited and strained resources and services.

To read the full article, please visit the CRIAW web site at <http://www.criaw-icref.ca/femnorthnet>

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The Spirit of the Work We Do

By Nicole Beier



The Feminist Northern Network, a recent project of CRIAW, is a research team dedicated to understanding and confronting the impacts economic development has on four Northern communities in Canada. This project has offered CRIAW a way to address more fully the issues faced by Indigenous women in Canada and to mobilize local resources toward positive change to the lives of women in Northern Communities through participatory action research.

One of the many exciting opportunities FemNorthNet brings is the responsibility to ensure the project has a northern and Indigenous focus. As the partners reminded us at our first planning meeting in July, their communities are located throughout rural Northern Canada, and CRIAW is centralized in urban Southeastern Ontario; and it is sometimes hard to bridge the gap between Northern and Southern needs, urban and rural realities, decentralized communities and centralized power. The first step of this process was to adapt the research plan to be reflective of Northern and Indigenous values. This would allow FemNorthNet to operate according to Indigenous needs, ways of communication and values. Through the research plans developed by our community partners and their experience in this area, we can assure that FemNorthNet operates from an anti-colonial, transformative and truly intersectional feminist framework. It also places the diverse needs of the communities and their individual cultural needs as the top-most priority for this project.

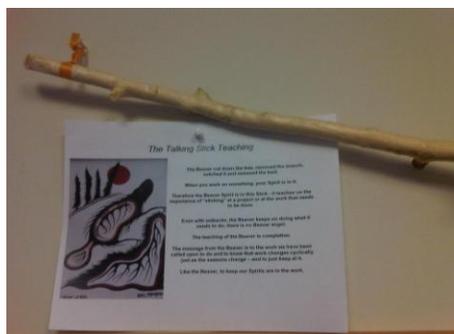
“One of the many exciting opportunities FemNorthNet brings is the responsibility to ensure the project has a northern and Indigenous focus.”

As well, the CRIAW office staff team including our Administrative Officer, myself, another student and the Project Manager are working with a creative young website developer to redesign and Northernize the CRIAW website. The goal is to make the website more engaging, to strengthen the Indigenous presence, and become a useful tool for Indigenous youth as well as the members of FemNorthNet. This task currently involves adding more audio/visuals, and more social networking links to our website, along with some other upcoming surprises. Keep checking out for these new and exciting changes at www.criaw-icref.ca!

The CRIAW office is another example of how the FemNorthNet project is influencing CRIAW to focus more on Indigenous culture and values. A gift from our new Project Manager is a poster hanging in the CRIAW office that reminds us of the influence Iroquois women had on the early feminist movement in North America and of the importance of acknowledging this aspect of feminist history in Canada. The poster includes pictures of three Haudenosaunee women of the Onondaga nation. The women pictured are the Deer clan mother Audrey Shenandoah and Eel clan daughter Rochelle Brown and Midwife Jessica Jeanne Shenandouh. These women were just some of the many Indigenous women who influenced early feminists to stand out against patriarchy and women's oppression. The Haudenosaunee women lived in cultures where the women shared equal responsibility and authority with the men, and whose lineage was traced matrilineally, or through the women. The equality that was shared amongst the men and women in the Haudenosaunee culture contradicted the patriarchal and oppressive cultures of non-Native women, and brought light to fact that that women's oppression was not natural or divinely ordained. This poster in the CRIAW office allows us show our thanks for the influence of Indigenous culture on feminism and to appreciate the vision of the Iroquois women that has helped move the feminist movement to where it is today.

The staff team has also "Indigenized" the CRIAW office by posting the Seven Sacred Teachings of the Anishnaabe, which are being applied to our work together. These sacred teachings are a way to find balance in our lives and work through the interdependence of the teachings.

The seven principles are: **Respect** of self and the earth and everything on it, **Humility** through honesty and balance, **Wisdom** through cherishing the knowledge from life experiences, **Love** of yourself and others to learn how to achieve your best potential, **Courage** when dealing with problems and confrontations, **Honesty** and living in the right way and speaking well of others and yourself, and **Truth** of knowing these things and living by them. These teachings are an example of how CRIAW and FemNorthNet can involve Indigenous knowledge in the daily processes of each project and to try to operate from an Indigenous perspective.



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At our 2-day Blueprints meeting in the summer with the FemNorthNet members, our new Project Manager shared the “Beaver teaching” of the Anishnaabe people. She donated a “Beaver Stick” from a real beaver who notched the stick and removed the bark. The spirit of the beaver is in the stick, and therefore it teaches that when you work on something your Spirit is in it as well. The beaver teaches us the importance of “sticking” to the project. Even with setbacks, the beaver continues to work without angst, and always completes the project with her Spirit in her work. The beaver stick now hangs in the office with the beaver teaching beside it, to remind us to “keep at it” and to keep our Spirit in the work we are doing.

Although it may seem small, these physical changes to the CRIAW space allow us to embrace Indigenous values and teachings, to remember and recognize the history of colonization on this land, and commits the CRIAW office to be a welcoming, safe and open space for all women. I believe these subtle changes can truly make a positive difference to CRIAW and FemNorthNet. Together we will continue to build positive change.

Sisters In Spirit

By Deborah Chansonneuve

Sisters In Spirit was started by the Native Women's Association of Canada ([NWAC](#)) in 2005 as a “research, education, and policy initiative” to address the long silence around murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls in Canada. The project touched the hearts of many, growing rapidly into a national and international movement for Indigenous women's human rights. Although the Harper government ended funding for this project on March 31 2010, families and friends of the 600 murdered and missing women and girls continue, with unshakeable determination and dedication to keep this issue alive. Every year, all over Canada they organize vigils and marches to honour and commemorate their loved ones and demand justice. The organizers of the global conference, Women's Worlds 2011 showed their support for Sisters in Spirit by hosting a march from the conference site to Parliament Hill. The march was joined by CRIAW board, staff, volunteers and FemNorthNet partners, including Gail Baikie who carried a photo honouring her friend, Henrietta Millie.



“Every year, all over Canada they organize vigils and marches to honour and commemorate their loved ones and demand justice.”

As sisters' do.... Where are you Henrietta?

Henrietta Millie
Taken December 10, 1982
From Your Sisters
Gail Baikie

I am 16
You 25
Grown up in my eyes
Too old to be my friend
But we are
Labrador sisters
Living away from home
For the very first time
In St. John's
When together
Home is
With us
Sitting
We know
As sisters do
Quiet, gentle, trusting
Sharing your thoughts, dreams, feelings
For your baby
As sisters do
Visiting
Running errands
As sisters do
Living separate lives
As sisters do
I hear
Your baby is taken
From you
What is a sister to do?
You call
Afraid of your boyfriend
What is a sister to do?
The police call
Asking do I know where you are?
Your purse and coat left behind
When you were taken
What is a sister to do?
I am 45
Attending Women's World
In Ottawa
Listening to
Talk about
Hundreds of
Taken
Aboriginal sisters
We remember
As sisters' do
And march unto Parliament Hill
In the hundreds
Hurt and angry
Demanding
A stop to the taking
And the return
Of our sisters
Reminding the nation
As sisters' do
Where are you Henrietta?



**FemNorthNet is
actively recruiting
Inuit, Métis and First
Nations student
researchers and
placements. If you
are interested in
applying please
send your resume
and your area of
interest to**

info@criawicref.ca

FNN Virtual Community

Stay connected! Come and visit our new Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/FemNorthNet-FNN/310749385606644>

Want to know more about what FemNorthNet is up to? Visit our CRIAW website at: www.criaw-icref.ca/femnorthnet.ca

FemNorthNet Partner Organizations

- Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health - Le Centre d'excellence de l'Atlantique pour la santé des femmes
- Bay St. George Status of Women Council, Stephenville NL
- Canadian Labour Congress - Congrès du travail du Canada
- Child Care Coalition of Manitoba
- Dalhousie University
- Disabled Women's Network Canada - Réseau d'action des femmes handicapées du Canada
- Labrador West Status of Women Council, Labrador City NL
- Labrador Institute of Memorial University
- Memorial University of Newfoundland
- Mokami Status of Women Council, Happy Valley-Goose Bay NL
- New North-SANC Services Inc
- North Central Community Futures Development Corporation
- Thompson Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation, Thompson MB
- UN Platform for Action Committee (UNPAC), Winnipeg MB
- University of Manitoba
- University of Ottawa - Université d'Ottawa
- University of Regina
- Village of La Loche

News

CRIAW and the Prairie Women's Health Centre for Excellence have partnered on an external evaluation for the Blueprints leadership projects. We are excited about working with this remarkable group of women – check out their website at www.pwhce.ca

Breaking News! **The Sixth Edition of a Statistical Profile of Women in Canada** has recently been updated to include a complete section on women with disabilities. Check it out at:

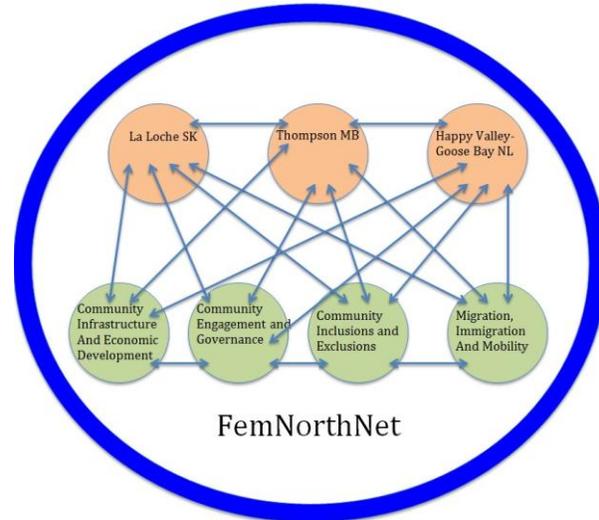
<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/bsolc/olc-cel/olc-cel?catno=89-503-X201000111545&lang=eng>

Special Thanks

FemNorthNet would like to thank both the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada ([SSHRC](http://www.sshrc.ca)) and Status of Women Canada ([SWC](http://www.swc.gc.ca)) for their funding.

Stay connected!

Come and visit
FemNorthNet's newly
launched Facebook
page!



FemNorthNet is a
5-year initiative
of the Canadian
Research Institute
for the
Advancement of
Women (CRIAW)

