



Our vision

Our mission

Our trajectories

Our battles

# Québec Native Women 1974 - 2019

*Kahnawake 2018*



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# Historical Milestones



1869

## ***An Act for the gradual enfranchisement of Indians***

First Canadian law to refuse Indian status to an Indian woman marrying a non-Indian, also impeding her children to acquire status. Taken up again in the Indian Act of 1876, these provisions were maintained until 1985 (RCAP, Vol.1: 327). It also requires women marrying an Indian and their children to belong to the husband's band. This act denies women the right to vote in band elections; the prohibition will be repealed in 1951.

1876

## ***Indian Act (IA)***

The law reinforces the discriminatory provisions of the 1869 Act. It states that only male Indians can vote on decisions to surrender reserve lands. A woman married to a non-Indian may, however, retain her right to receive her annuities, but this right will be altered with the recasting of the 1920 Act (Jamieson 1978).

1884

## ***Modifications of the Indian Act***

Any Indian who holds a rental ticket on reserve land now has the right to draw up a will. In order to benefit from this legacy, his wife had to live with him at the time of his death and be "a woman of good morals", according to the criteria established by federal authorities (RCAP, Vol. 1, 1996: 324).

1951

## ***Indian Act amendment***

Introduction of the Indian Register that identifies persons with Indian status under the Act. The latter also provides for the compulsory emancipation of women marrying a non-Indian. When this practice was abolished, 6301 involuntary emancipations had been registered between 1951 and 1975 (DIA 1958: 34-35).

1967

## ***Creation of the Equal Rights for Indian Women Association***

Mary Two-Axe Early, a member of the Mohawk Nation from Kahnawake, played a key role in the defence of human rights in Canada and the Americas. Having observed injustices perpetrated against Native women who had lost their status as registered Indian when they married a non-Indian, and having experienced such a prejudice herself, she founded the Equal Rights for Indian Women (ERIW) movement in 1967. ERIW would be at the origin of the creation of the Québec Native Women's Association in 1974.

1967

## ***Bird Commission***

to  
1970

Representatives of ERIW go to Ottawa to present a brief to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (Bird Commission) on the discriminating situation that Native women face in relation to the Indian Act. In its report submitted on December 7th, 1970, the Commission denounces discrimination against Native women resulting from the Indian Act and recommends that this law be amended so that an Indian woman who marries a non-Indian man can maintain her status and transfer it to her children (QNWA 1978, RCSWC 1970).

# Tribute to the Presidents



**Margaret Horn**  
1974



**Sylvia Watso**  
1974



**Colette Boudrias**  
1975



**Monique Saoui**  
1976



**Mary Two Axe Early**



**Evelyn O'Bomsawin**  
1977-1983



**Bibiane Courtois**  
1983-1987



**Michèle Rouleau**  
1987-1992



**Jacqueline Kistabish**  
1992-1998



**Michèle-Taïna Audette**  
1998-2004  
2010-2012



**Ellen Gabriel**  
2004-2010



**Viviane Michel**  
2012-...

*At its inception in 1974, Indian women from all walks of life felt the need to get together and to make their needs and priorities known. They noticed that the problems faced by Indian women, whether they are Montagnaises, Algonquins, Mohawks or other, are similar. They saw that they were isolated, that they lived on the margins of the reserve, in the reserve, in a village and even in the city. They deemed that all Indian women should have a say in their children's education, on the transmission of culture, so that they could become proud women and men. They also wanted, for the Indian women who wished to do so, to get training in order to access better employment. Together with local authorities, they wanted to improve health services that were offered in their communities. They also wanted to take action against drug and alcohol abuse in their communities. This much is sure, women wanted to actively participate in the life of their communities (QNWA 1980a:1, free translation).*

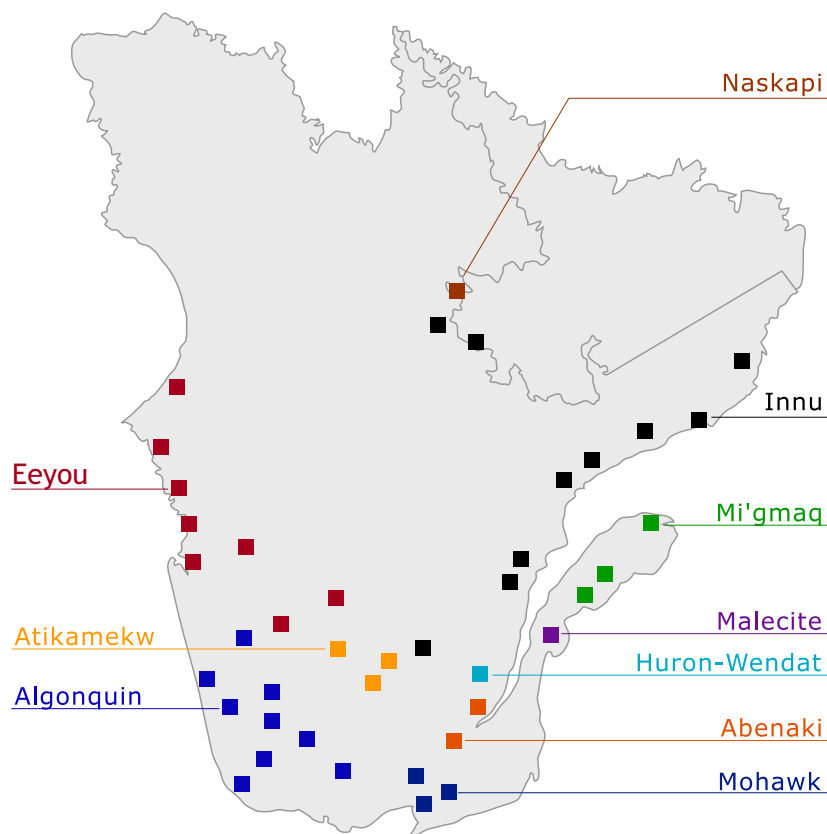
# The Founding of the Association

*The Québec Native Women Association was created in January 1974. A few months before, during her work travels, Mrs. Margaret Pichovich from the Laurentian Alliance of Metis and non-status Indians, noticed that Quebec Natives were not only misrepresented at the different delegations but also misinformed about Native activities elsewhere in Canada. At this moment, it was agreed to create an association for Québec Native Women. The meeting of the planning committee of the future Association took place at the Laurentien Hotel on March 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>th</sup>, 1974.*

*On July 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of the same year, the founding meeting of the Québec Native Women was convened at the Loyola College by the Chairwoman of Mrs. Gloria George. It is exclusively a women association because the essential needs of women and men are often very different. Thus, the Association is a good way for the province's Native women to be heard.*

*Every summer since 1976, projects have been initiated to better understand the aspirations of its members. Resolutions in defense of Native women's rights have been submitted to both provincial and federal governments (AFAQ 1980a)*

Les nations autochtones du Québec  
Quebec Native Nations





# The First Years : 1974-1980

1974

## **Foundation of the Québec Native Women's Association (QNW)**

In the wake of the creation of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), First Nations women in Quebec established the Québec Native Women's Association in order to ensure a better representation of their perspectives (Lévesque 1993).

1977

## **Wake up Native Women!**

First brief submitted to the Board of revision for the Indian Act, in which the Association “recommends that the Indian woman maintain her status in the case of a marriage with a non-Indian” (QNWA 1980a: 57; Morissette and Rouleau 1982: 118, free translation). The brief is sent to different bodies, including the majority of Native associations in the province and the National Indian Brotherhood.

1977

## **Opposition to the adoption of Native children outside of communities**

The Association submits the *Protect Our Children* brief in parliamentary committee: “The adoption of Indian children by white people constitutes a plague [...]. Not only do children lose their status, but they are cut off from their language and culture. Often, they don't even know they are Indians” (QNWA 1980a: 88, free translation).

1978

## **To be or not to be...being a Native woman in Quebec**

Production of the first awareness document describing the effects of losing one's status for Indian women and recounting the decades of struggle to change the Indian Act (AFAQ 1978).

1978

## **New alliances**

With the imminent threat of eviction for non-status women from their community of origin, the Association joins forces with the *Fédération des femmes du Québec* and the *Commission des droits de la personne*; various letters were sent to the Department of Indian Affairs in protest (QNWA 1980a).

1979

## **Demonstrations of solidarity**

A group of women from the Tobique reserve in New-Brunswick undertake a 110-mile walk from Kanesatake to Ottawa, to mark 110 years of injustice perpetrated against Indian women since the enactment of the Indian Act. Women's groups from across the country join in the walk, including many women from the Association (QNWA 1980a).

1979

## **Establishment of two programs on Native culture**

The Association proposes to teach Native culture in schools attended by Native students; crafts and heritage are particularly emphasized. Due to a lack of funding, the project only lasts one summer (QNWA 1980a).

1980

## **The Association's first operating budgets**

Granted from Secretary of State (federal) and the *Secrétariat des activités gouvernementales en milieu amérindien et inuit* (provincial), this funding allowed for the implementation of a permanent secretariat, and at times, paid for staff salaries, and enabled more regular visits and connections with regional and local chapters (Morissette 1983).

1980

## **Health services: a critical issue for the Native population**

Submitted to the Department of Health and Welfare Canada, this voluminous brief was also sent to numerous federal and provincial government departments, as well as various organizations fighting for women's rights and combating racism (QNWA 1980a).



# From Constitutional Conferences to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples : 1981 to 1996

1982

## **Fight against discrimination in all circumstances and on all platforms**

The Association submits a brief on sexual discrimination to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

1984

## **Violence: a scourge to eliminate**

For the first time, the Association identifies violence as being one of its priority actions. Three symposiums, held on the topic of violence in Native communities in 1996, 1998 and 2001 gathered over 1500 participants.

1985

## **Fund for victims of discrimination**

Following the adoption of Bill C-31, a fund is created for women victims of discrimination.

1988

## **An increased participation of Native women in the economy depends on the development of childcare services**

At the Hearings for Native childcare services, the Association observes that a greater participation of Native women in the education sector and on the market creates an urgent need for childcare services in Native communities (QNWA 1988).

1989

## **National Aboriginal Inquiry on the Impacts of Bill C-31**

At the National Aboriginal Inquiry on the Impacts of Bill C-31, the Association states that Indian women were rejoiced by the abolition of provision 12(1)(b). This joyful moment did not last as the implementation of the law remained unequal: "A band who refuses to register the children, another that denies women who have regained their status the right to vote for a period of 10 years, another that denies a woman the right to vote on the reserve with her husband. Many women are denied access to decent housing" (QNWA 1989 : 1, free translation).

1992

## **The Association is recognized by the Assembly of First Nations Quebec Labrador (AFNQL)**

Six years after their initial request, the Association is finally recognized at the provincial Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador; it may now sit at and participate in all of AFNQL meetings, but without the right to vote.

1993

## **Taking Our Rightful Place**

This document, submitted during the RCAP hearings, identifies six priorities for Native women: domestic violence, childcare services, Indigenous women in urban centres, the consequences of Bill C-31, the importance of the application of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in future Native governments, and finally, the political participation of Indigenous women. Mary Two Axe Early also presents a brief at the RCAP.

1994

## **The administration of justice: for a fair representation of Native women**

At the Advisory Committee on the Administration of Justice in Aboriginal Communities, the Association demands that "a fair representation of women in the implementation of new community justice systems and the taking into account of their preoccupations regarding the security of women and children" (Pelletier 2001 : 3, free translation).

1995

## **Incorporate Native realities into Quebec's family policies**

This document, submitted to the *Comité interministériel de coordination en matière de violence conjugale et familiale* (interdepartmental coordinating committee on spousal and family violence), deals with the impacts of domestic violence not only for the victims, but also for the community as a whole. Building on its own work, the Association suggests supporting action in Native communities by, among others, implementing local roundtables, justice system that accounts for Native cultures, violence prevention programs, and training for service providers.



# The Turn of the Century: 1997-2010

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**2000** **Participation at the World March of Women, an initiative of the Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ)**  
At the World March of Women, the Association states its position on the necessity of intervening to improve the conditions of Native women residing in women shelters (Simard 2008). Five years later, the Association and the FFQ sign a declaration of solidarity.

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**2000** **Tous ensemble/Kasséwé/Together Tour**  
During a provincial consultation, the Association visits a number of communities to discuss land issues, housing, economic development, education, justice and health. Over two hundred women participate in the tour: “the women expressed their unease with the application of justice, the ways in which the judicial apparatus operates and the presentation of parajudiciary services” (Hannis 2000 : 13, free translation)

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**2003** **Creation of the Native Women’s Shelters Network**  
The network is implemented by the Association with the support of those in charge of the Québec women shelters; the program aims to promote training among shelter workers and the exchange of information between shelters. Owing to the great diversity of experiences, these exchanges turn out to be fairly important.

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**2005** **Symposium Path Toward Equality**  
On the occasion of the Association’s 30th anniversary, a partnership with INRS allows for the gathering of over 150 First Nations and Inuit women. Central to the symposium is the quest for autonomy, which is inseparable from social reconstruction initiatives and cultural affirmation stemming from local communities and Native political institutions.

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**2007** **Participation in Quebec’s adoption regime work group**  
The Association joins the *Regroupement des centres d’amitié autochtones du Québec* to produce a document that addresses the singular place of children in Native cultures, First Nations’ customary adoption, and other concerns raised in the legislation.

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**2007** **Enlace Continental in Kahnawake**  
The fifth continental meeting of Native women of the Americas (ENLACE network) is organized in Kahnawake. It brings together over 250 women from 17 different countries.

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**2008** **Ishkuteu**  
This action-research project is developed within the framework of a partnership between the Association, DIALOG network, *Fédération de ressources d’hébergement pour femmes violentées et en difficulté au Québec* (FRHFVDQ), and Service aux collectivités of UQAM. The project aims to improve “access to services meeting the specific needs of Québec Native women facing domestic violence and other related problems, both within and outside their communities” (Pharand 2008 : i).

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**2010** **Wasaiya – Because I’m a Native woman: ensuring full compliance to the right to equality for Native women in Quebec**  
Training program stemming from a collaboration between the UQAM law clinic and Services aux collectivités, and the Association. Wasaiya aims to better equip Québec Native women from nine different communities with respect to their rights and the mechanisms at their disposal to claim them (Duhaim 2010 : 4, free translation).

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**2010** **2010 Mobilization surrounding Bill C-3 project**  
The Association submits a brief regarding the Bill C-3 project, An act to promote gender equity in Indian registration, by responding to the Court of Appeal for British Columbia decision in *McIvor v. Canada*. The association favorably greets the will to modify the dispositions of the Bill with regards to registration, but deplores “the restrictive vision proposed by the Federal Government that will not truly end this discrimination and the lack of any effective and meaningful consultation with Aboriginal peoples” (QNW 2010 : 3).

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- 2012** ***Guidelines for Research with Native Women***  
“The document provides a context for research involving Native Peoples, particularly Native women [and] a brief overview of existing tools as well as principles and modalities to be respected” (QNW 2012: 4, free translation)
- 
- 2013** ***Celebrating our history, drawing our future***  
On the occasion of its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Association brings together some 200 Native women from 10 Nations of Quebec as well as from urban areas. The central theme of the meeting “Celebrating our history, drawing our future” is meant to strengthen leadership skills.
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- 2014** ***Promoting Aboriginal women’s traditional governance***  
This conference brought together some 170 women from First Nations communities from all regions of Quebec.
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- 2014** ***Toolkit for Native Midwives***  
With the support of the National Aboriginal Council of Midwives, the Association launches a toolkit.
- 
- 2015** ***Nāniawig Māmawe Nīnawind. Stand With Us***  
The purpose of this document is to identify the causes of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Quebec and to detail the specificities of this phenomenon in order to develop a comprehensive strategy to prevent and mitigate its effects.
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- 2016** ***Recognition of Representative Indigenous Organization Status***  
The Association obtains this status from the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada. This recognition allows it to obtain the necessary funding to continue its activities that were previously jeopardized by the Conservative government’s budget cuts (QNW 2016).
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- 2017** ***Tsi Te Tio’karas Tatia’kénhe Tanon Tsi Te Ioswat’the - Step out of the Shadows, Walk Towards the Light***  
Publication of an intervention guide and training material on sexual assault.
- 
- 2017  
à  
2018** ***Participation in national and provincial inquiry Commissions***  
In keeping with the events of Fall 2015 in Val-d’Or, the Association had repeatedly called for an independent public inquiry into the relationship between Native women and police institutions. In 2017 and 2018, the Association participated in two public inquiry commissions: at the federal level, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and; at the provincial level, the Public Inquiry Commission on relations between Indigenous Peoples and certain public services in Québec: listening, reconciliation and progress.
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- 2018** ***Training for service workers within the Quebec coalition of sexual assault centers (CALACS)***  
A two-day training session for the Quebec coalition of sexual assault centers (CALACS) service workers is organized with the aim of improving their outreach work with Native women as well as to raise awareness of their needs and realities.
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- 2018** ***Counter Extractivism***  
As part of the international meeting *Women in resistance to extractivism*, 40 indigenous women from 13 countries met to recognize each other’s work and to reaffirm their struggles for the defense of life and territory (QNW 2018).

# Throughout the years

Between 1974 and 2018 the Association submitted more than 65 briefs to various government bodies. Some of these briefs were particularly influential.

## 1976 : *Wake-Up Native Woman!*

Submitted to the Indian Act Board of Revision, the Association recommends that Indian women maintain their status even if they marry non-Indian men.

## 1982 : *Working to combat discrimination facing Native women*

Document filed to the sub-committee of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, it presents a number of legal recommendations to amend all *Indian Act* articles that reproduced sexual discrimination towards Native women.

1976

1980

1982

1989

## 1989 : *Presentation at the National Aboriginal Inquiry on the impacts of Bill C-31*

The Association depicts the continuing discrimination faced by Native women in spite of Bill C-31, particularly with regards to the strenuous implementation of the Bill.

## 1980 : *Health Services: A Critical Issue for Quebec's Native Population*

Submitted to the Department of Health and Welfare Canada (as well as many other organizations), the brief addressed the need for on reserve physicians and the difficulty of accessing to health care services in the public system.

### 1993 : *Taking Our Rightful Place*

Brief submitted to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples; central to the document are topics of violence, daycare services in Native communities, and the *Indian Act*

### 2007 : *Traditional and Customary Adoption in the First Nations*

Brief presented to the Quebec Adoption System Working Group at the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Social Services. It recommends prioritizing adoption within the extended family, the community, or the Nation in order to support Native cultural and family realities.

1993

1995

2007

2016

### 2016 : *From equality in right to equality in fact*

In the context of the consultation of Native organizations for the provincial government's action plan *Together for Equality Government Strategy for Gender Equality*, the Association presents a brief to the *Secrétariat à la condition féminine*.

### 1995 : *Brief submitted to the Cree Commission on Quebec Sovereignty*

The Association warns of the dangers posed by Quebec sovereignty claims to First Nations in terms of recognizing their rights.



# Key Issues

## Legal Equality

Since the inception of the Association, the fight for legal equality and for justice more broadly has been its cornerstone. Despite actions in several social, economic, political and cultural areas in recent decades to improve the quality and living conditions of women and communities, legal equality remains the major site of convergence and struggle.

The Association's battle to change the Indian Act is but one part of the fight for legal equality of Native women. Furthermore, this issue was not resolved with Bill C-31, which in 1985 amended section 12 (1)(b) of the Indian Act and recognized the status of Indian women who had married non-natives, and that of their children. While Bill C-31 sought to remedy certain injustices, at the same time, it bred new tensions between individuals of different statuses—which is detrimental to the formulation of a common national Native societal project—and created a new type of exclusion for those women who are sometimes called the “C-31s” and considered as “half-Indian” (Garneau 2002). Additionally, a new discrimination emerged with the implementation of Bill C-31 for single mothers, who must “provide an affidavit signed by the father of their child to determine the status of the child”. In the absence of this signed evidence, the father of the child is presumed to be non-Indian (QNSA 1989 : 4). In the face of these discriminations, the Association has continued, over the years, to support gender equity in the recognition of Indian status and membership in a band.

In April 2010, during consultations on Bill C-3 which led to the adoption of *An Act to promote gender equity in Indian registration*, the Association denounced the lack of scope of the bill, as it did not put in place any consultation process with Native Peoples. Indeed, the Association considered that the government was adopting measures that were only intended to solve a specific problem and therefore “misse[d] the opportunity to finally eradicate the historical and institutional forms of discrimination suffered by native women and their descendants since 1876 because of the Indian Act” (QNSA 2010 : 18). The Association then recommended that the Government of Canada hold inclusive consultation sessions with Native communities and organizations that wish to participate.

It is therefore important to underline the almost unconditional support of the Association for the political autonomy work of Native institutions in the past decades. However, the Association distances itself from the dominant discourse by insisting on the need to provide mechanisms to ensure that women are not excluded from the political process or discriminated against by band councils that are often male dominated. The Association maintained this position throughout the constitutional debates of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Finally, the Association remains the only Native organization advocating for the adoption of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms since its inception, combined with the demands for political autonomy. The Association has always argued that collective rights go hand in hand with individual rights, demonstrating that this co-application is possible, ensuring an equal place for everyone within the broader Native societal project.

## Violence

In 1984, the Association made violence in Native communities one of its priorities. As of 1987, an awareness campaign named *Violence is Tearing Us Apart—Let's Get Together!* is launched across the province to reach communities, stakeholders and governments. At the same time, the Association creates a non-violence promotion coordinator position within its organization.

During the 1990s, the Association sets out to identify the root causes of violence in the communities in order to revise and design more appropriate intervention methods. The Association notes that the services are not in line with Native realities, and denounces the intermittent funding from governments. Service segmentation and the lack of coordination between the different programs make intervention and progress very difficult. The process of criminalizing abusers and victims is called into question, as is the effectiveness of police intervention in Native communities. The problem extends to front-line workers, who are too often unprepared and isolated.

The decade ends with the organization of three conferences on violence. The causes of the problem are highlighted: colonization, the Indian Act, residential schools and the loss of political and cultural identity. Among the solutions considered, the emphasis is on the importance of listening to the stories of people who have the courage to denounce, and on the responsibility of aggressors. A culture of non-violence is emerging within the Association, which promotes collective action for healing.

In the 2000s, the Association sought to better understand how to improve the judicial treatment of cases of violence against Native women. A series of training sessions is developed for Native practitioners. The demands focus more specifically on access to services responding to the needs of women (especially shelters). Initiatives include a brief presented to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, and the establishment of the Ishkuteu action-research project in 2008.

In recent years, the Association's efforts have focused heavily on the phenomenon of missing and murdered Indigenous women. It participates in provincial, national and international actions to raise awareness of violence and sexual assault against Indigenous women. In 2015, the Association is launched a campaign with Amnesty International to stop violence against Indigenous women.

Most recently, in March of 2018, the First Nations Forum on Sexual Assault was organized by the Association in partnership with the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission. This meeting, which mobilized some 200 people from diverse backgrounds, spawned an action plan and resulted in the launch of the #wehealtogether campaign. With this hashtag, people can share on social media their commitment to fighting sexual assault in their community.





## Leadership

To advance Indigenous feminist demands, the Association regularly joins forces with different organizations in all forums. Moreover, the Association studies all the bills, measures or policies of the various levels of government concerning Native women. Hence, in the 1980s and 1990s, the Association participated in constitutional debates. In 1988, the Association presented a brief on the Meech Lake agreement denouncing the fact that Native peoples were not recognized as a distinct society. The Association also acts on provincial issues. For example, it participated in the organization of the 2012 Plan Nord Forum, highlighting that the Plan creates jobs mainly for men and could have a negative impact on Native communities. In 2016, the Association wrote an open letter to the Quebec Premier calling for an independent and impartial inquiry into the behavior of Quebec police forces toward Native women.

While advocating for the legal equality of women, the Association has diversified its fields of action over the years and increased its presence on national and international scenes, regarding virtually every aspect of the daily lives of Native women. During the 1990s, the media became more and more interested in the Association, which in turn began issuing press releases, thus raising the awareness of the general public about issues affecting Native women. The Association also ensures visibility on the provincial and national scenes by partnering with other organizations, most notably the Fédération des Femmes du Québec, with which it signed a solemn declaration of solidarity in 2004. The Association also participates in several events, sometimes in partnership with other organizations, in order to increase its presence in the media, the public stage, and in the academy. Forums, symposia and round tables have been part of the Association's activities since its founding in 1974 and have been particularly important since the late 1980s.

In addition to campaigning to influence national and provincial policies, the Association's actions also engage Native political organizations. For example, in 1995, the Association submitted a brief to the Cree Commission on Quebec Sovereignty in which it noted the dangers posed by Quebec sovereignty claims to First Nations. The Association's actions in Quebec allowed it to obtain a seat at the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Chiefs Table in 1992. Although the Association does not have the right to vote, it is the only association that allows women to be heard at these meetings. This seat, previously unofficial, was formally granted on June 28, 2001.

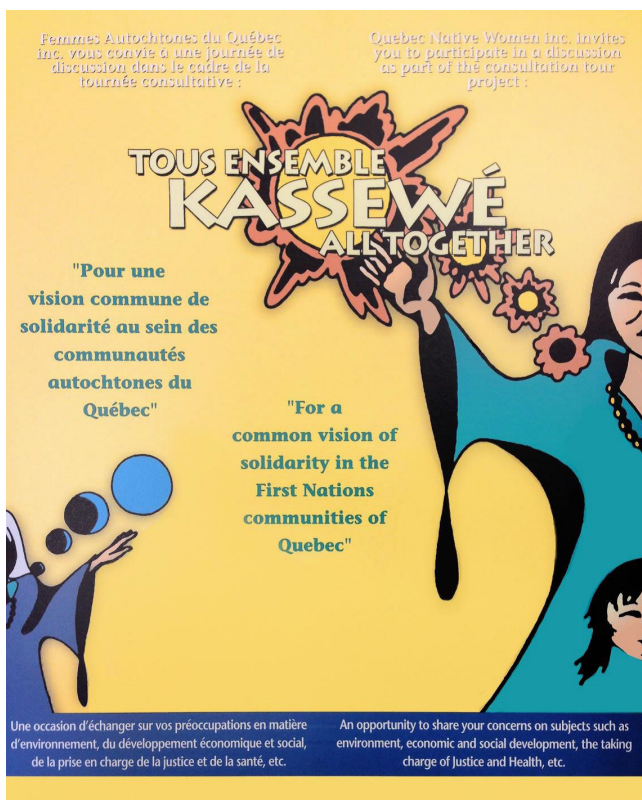
The Association is also involved in international forums. In 2009, in recognition of its expertise, the Association obtained consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The Association also participates in the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which functions under the ECOSOC. Through actions at the provincial, national and international levels, the Association becomes, as former President Michèle Rouleau stated, "the voice of many women who do not always have one."

## Relationships with member Nations

Promptly after its foundation, the Association begins conducting surveys gathering the views of women in communities and urban centers to target their needs and thus better direct its actions. Accordingly, the Association's first brief, *Wake up Native Women!* (1977) was based on a survey of 369 women and 66 men from various locations across the province. Similarly, the 1980 brief *Health Services: A Crucial Problem among the Aboriginal Population of Quebec* was the result of a study conducted in the summer of 1979 involving 1380 individuals.

This determination to represent the interests, concerns, and engagements of Native women on issues that concern them was maintained and renewed throughout the Association's history. At the turn of the century, the Association launched a province-wide consultation tour. Two hundred women of all First Nations were consulted during the spring and summer of 2000. These resulted in a report and recommendations called *Kassewé—Together for a common vision of solidarity in the First Nations Communities of Québec* (Hannis 2000).

Furthermore, it was always important for the Association to inform its members as well as all Native women about issues that concern them and about Native claims in general (Lévesque 1993). As of 1990, and in the wake of developments regarding the issue of violence, the newsletter *Together Against Violence—Anishnabe-kwe* was launched with the aim of providing community women with useful information about existing services and resources. Three issues of the newsletter were published that same year.



*"It is essential to have the means to communicate. To ensure the dissemination of accurate information in our communities, the Québec Native Women's Association intends to produce: 1) a newsletter 2) a resource guide 3) a collection of photos"*  
(Anishnabe-kwe newsletter, January 1990)

The *Telegram Moccasin* replaced the newsletter in 1993, and in spite of several interruptions due to the lack of adequate funding, 2,000 copies were produced three times a year in the 2000s; its activities have recently resumed, in 2014.

Finally, the Association ensures that it maintains a relationship with member Nations from across the province by holding an Annual General Assembly (AGA) attended by delegates from each of the member Nations, as well as members of the Association's Executive Committee. The AGA is an opportunity for the Executive Committee to summarize the work in progress, and for the delegates to bring forth resolutions. As such, the AGA is an opportunity to make joint decisions based on the Association work and various workshops on key topics.



# Actions

## Women Shelters : Since the end of the 1980s, the Association is advocating for the recognition of the needs of Native women residing in shelters

The release of the Family Violence Program in 1991 was a defining moment. The program was created based on the work of the coordinator who travelled to meet women in communities across the province. Communities were responsive to the Association's efforts, agreeing on the importance of talking about violence and mental health, and of finding solutions to existing issues. Several ideas were then launched: a provincial newsletter, a resource guide for communities, and a newspaper. The Program targets issues related to shelters that host Native women, including training for shelter workers, community-based support systems, mental health issues, and media communications.

In 2003, the Association established the Native Women's Shelters Network to provide support to practitioners in improving service delivery and in the development of programs and services for victims of violence. The Network supports the Association's mission of promoting non-violence by raising awareness among Native communities about domestic violence and the importance of shelters. It now includes 11 shelters located in different communities and urban centers, and promotes training and information sharing. It is important to note that "The Network utilizes an Aboriginal approach[...] that includes both the family and the community for an overall process of healing, involving women, men and children" (Aboriginal Research Institute 2012).

In 2008, the Ishkuteu Action Research Project, a partnership between the Association, UQAM, the Fédération de ressources d'hébergement pour femmes violentées et en difficulté du Québec, and DIALOG Research and Knowledge Network relating to Aboriginal Peoples, was developed to improve access to services that better meet the needs of Native women experiencing domestic violence and related issues, both within and outside of communities (Pharand 2008). As part of this project, 195 workers from Native and non-Native shelters were trained about Native realities, through networking activities among others.

## Youth : Ensuring Native women leadership for future generations

The first brief presented reported on the problem of the adoption of Indian children by non-Indian parents (Protect Our Children, 1976). To this day, the Association is constantly reviewing the practices of the Director of Youth Protection and emphasizes the cultural realities related to the customary adoption of young people. In 2016, the Association supported "the intention of the legislator to legally recognize Aboriginal legal orders and their effects on the Quebec legal system in terms of customary adoption" (free translation, QNW 2013 : 3). However, the Association suggests that the term "child care" be used rather than "customary adoption" as the latter term better reflects a Native view of adoption.

Since the 1980s, the Association has also been committed to promoting non-violence in communities and particularly in relation to youth. Guiding tools and directories are regularly produced as part of training activities. For example, the Drum Beats for the Youth (2000) reports on a training session aimed at familiarizing young women and men aged 18 to 25 with the fundamental issues of civic democracy. A reference tool was also produced, containing reflections on history, identity, spirituality, intercultural relations and gender relations.

The activities of the Association include a youth component in order to engage the next generation. Since 2005, the Council of Young Indigenous Women is made up of one woman from each Nation, with the objective of defending the interests of young women from 18 to 30 on the NWQ board. Young Native women also have opportunities to be heard at the political level, for example during the Summer School of the Institut du Nouveau Monde, or by getting involved in the planning of the Action Strategy for Aboriginal Youth 2017-2022.

## **Research : The Association regularly conducts research activities to better understand the needs of its members and to renew its knowledge on various issues**

The Association supports research on priority themes and contributes to the development of conceptual frameworks to better represent the realities of Native women. For example, the report titled *Assessment of Violence and Mental Health Conditions among Native Peoples in Quebec* (Pelletier and Laurin 1993) presents a critical knowledge synthesis on mental health and violence in Native communities. The report denounces the lack of indicators that would allow an accurate picture of the situation. Leaders also denounce “the fragmentation of services, demanding control over resources and cultural sensitivity, or bringing up a Native perspective on health issues” (p. 6).

The Association research work aims at increasing the knowledge base on women’s needs in order to improve the Association’s practices. For example, in 2002, a Needs Assessment surveyed 123 women from different communities in order to identify key terms for strategic planning. The questions focused on the needs of women in relation to their living conditions, their communities and their role within the Association. Overall, this consultation was highly appreciated and led to targeted actions, including the creation of new positions, new training, and a restructuring of the Association to strengthen its direct relationships with women (Groupe Recherche Focus 2002).

The Association has been reflecting on the best ways to carry out research that respects the values and knowledge of Native women. In 2012, these questions were formalized through the *Research Guidelines for Aboriginal Women* (Basile 2012), a living and inclusive document that offers several tools for researchers. The Association emphasizes the dual particularity of research with Native women, stemming from the fact that they are both women and Native. It proposes twelve principles that guide research involving Native women, in addition to the four already formulated by the National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO) in this regard.

## **Training : Over time, many training courses were offered on various issues to the Native and non-Native population**

One of the first trainings organized (1992) was dedicated to the shelter workers regarding Native women victims of violence. The purpose was to explain the primary mission of the shelters, the services offered, the complementary resources, as well as the funding challenges. This training was part of a larger mandate that continues today to address violence against Native women in communities and urban settings.

The Association was also mobilized in relation to the initiative of the Quebec Training Center to offer, in 2003, a three-day educational training on Innu law. Named Innu Tipenitemun, the training aimed to expand the knowledge of young men and women on self-government, Aboriginal law, the UN system, modern treaties and the Indian Act, among other things. Training was given to 24 young adults aged between 18 and 30. It enabled them to acquire tools and mechanisms for the recognition of their rights and those of their communities.

For the purpose of informing Native women from different Nations about human rights, the Wasaiya training project was launched in 2010, in collaboration with UQAM Legal Clinic and Community Services. The workshop focused on three issues: legal status issues, the Youth Protection Act and matrimonial property. Wasaiya aimed to counter the lack of resources and empower Native women to improve their living conditions. More than 120 Native women participated between 2010 and 2012.





# Alliances

## Alliances : Since its creation, the Association has built various alliances and partnerships with Native and Quebec organizations

*Mikimon* project emerged from a partnership between the Association and the Institut National de la Recherche Scientifique. The purpose was to identify the challenges that Native women face in the job market and to propose solutions to these issues. The partnership, funded by Status of Women Canada, resulted in the publication of *Aboriginal Women and Jobs: Challenges and Issues for Employability Programs in Quebec*, in 2001. The report recommendations “target acquisition of new knowledge, the dissemination of that knowledge, heightened awareness among and guidance for clients, and the introduction of employability pilot programs” (p. 84).

It is in the context of alliances that the Association and the Fédération des Femmes du Québec (FFQ) signed a solidarity declaration, which the FFQ reiterated several times, particularly in 2015 and 2016. FFQ is an autonomous feminist organization that was founded in 1966 which works to transform gender relationships and eliminate all forms of domination. It backs many of the Association’s claims, including the self-determination of Indigenous Peoples and it supported, in 2015, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

The Association and the Association of Native Friendship Centers of Quebec (RCAAQ) partnered in 2008 to support Native women living in urban settings. The RCAAQ has campaigned for 40 years for the rights and interests of Native citizens in Quebec cities. The two organizations signed collaborative briefs:

*Presentation Concerning the Revision of the Youth Protection Act. Is the History of the Aboriginal Residential Schools in Danger of Repeating Itself?*

*Traditional and Custom Adoption in the First Nations.*

## International : The Association’s activities include a presence in many international spaces

The Association collaborated in 1993 with Droits et Démocratie and the Canadian International Development Agency to initiate the ENLACE Network (Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas). ENLACE brings together 23 indigenous women’s organizations from the Americas. The Association represents women from the First Nations of Quebec, and has participated in all continental meetings, which take place every three to four years. Finally, the network allows for the consolidation of exchanges between Native women across the three Americas.

In 1993, the Association participated in the first international Indigenous Women of the Americas meeting held in Guatemala. During this event, Indigenous women from across the Americas were able to work together on concrete communication projects at the international level. Today, they continue to organize around initiatives for the protection of the territory (Mother Earth), the environment, and the sovereignty of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas. They also take on the responsibility of ensuring the safety, well-being and health of their children and future generations.

Every five years since 2000, the Association actively participates in organizing the activities of the World March of Women, a feminist initiative launched by the Fédération des Femmes du Québec (FFQ). In 2015, the Association was a member of the Québec Coordination for the March. During these meetings, which bring together women from all over the world, the focus is on creating strategies for resistance, social transformation and international solidarity. In addition, the March promotes the fight against violence and poverty. In 2010, the World March of Women gathered 4500 groups from 150 countries.



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