

*The Sacred Space
of Womanhood*

Mothering Across the Generations

January 24-25, 2012 | Delta Ottawa Hotel & Suites | Ottawa, Ontario

Agenda

NATIONAL COLLABORATING CENTRE
FOR ABORIGINAL HEALTH



CENTRE DE COLLABORATION NATIONALE
DE LA SANTÉ AUTOCHTONE



“My mother was a protector of our family and maintained its values of love, honesty, truth, responsibility and respect. She taught me how to dream and to have enough confidence in myself to see those dreams become reality.”

Margo Greenwood, Academic Leader, NCCA

A MESSAGE OF WELCOME

Greetings All

Greeting sisters, grandmothers, aunts, daughters and mothers. And greetings sons, brothers, uncles, fathers, and grandfathers.

To begin by saying that mothering is fundamental to all humanity would be a truthful way to start this discussion.

- Mothering involves nurturing and raising children
- Mothering extends far beyond biology and bodies
- Mothering is the act and practice of love and knowledge transmission
- Mothering is the most foundational element of health and well-being across multiple times and spaces
- Mothering is political

Without mothering, it is fair to say there quite literally would be almost nothing of what we know as the world in which we live today.

Mothering is life.

And yet this feels like an incomplete place to start. It feels incomplete because these statements, truthful as they are, remain abstract.

A better place to begin, then, is to tell you a little bit about my mother, and about myself as a mother. Only from this lived experience is it possible for me to then chart the politics, histories, and philosophies of mothering and mothers in Indigenous communities, to outline the importance of mothering to the histories, present days, and futures of Indigenous people, and to celebrate the strength, courage, and resiliencies that



predominate in mothers from coast to coast to coast and around the world.

My mother passed away before her time. She was young and so was I. In the time she spent on this earth, she gave birth to three children and, in the most fundamental and primal ways, ensured we had the wills and skills to thrive. My mother was the protector of our family and maintained its values of love, honesty, truth, responsibility and respect. She taught me how to dream and to have enough confidence in myself to see those dreams become reality. My mother role modelled for me working hard and not giving up. I remember my mother telling my brothers and me that there was always a way to figure things out no matter how great the problem. My mother had a great sense of humour, she had colloquial sayings for everything and they were funny! Today one of my friends collects them so that one day we can write about them. Fond memories of my mother and what she taught me are always close at hand.

I am now a mother of three children, all boys, who teach me as much about life (and how to live it) as I hope I have been able to and will continue to teach them. Each

A MESSAGE OF WELCOME



of my sons is unique in his appearance and being. Each has taught me many lessons. They have taught me about love, especially about siblings' love for one another. They ground me in reality so that repeatedly I know that our relationships are the most important part of my life. They are active and they make me laugh as I travel with them on their journeys to adulthood and beyond. For my part, I have loved them in ways that I trust will foster self confidence, integrity, respect and a realization of their unique gifts. I have laughed with them, cried with them and cared for them. I have taught them about their family and their ancestors; I have shared our family stories. Now that my sons are older, I take great pride in their accomplishments but even more pride in who they have become as young men.

The act of mothering is reciprocal, always a two-way endeavour, always a back and forth and transformative dialogue. All people are nurtured. No less vital than the umbilical cord's role of joining mother and child in utero, back and forth relationships exist between mother and child throughout all the life stages.

From my mother, and now as a mother, I have come to understand that mothering is life.

Let me say here that mothering is not solely limited to relationships between a female parent and her biological offspring. Mothering, as a relationship and practice, is a social and cultural act that occurs between multiple configurations of people of many generations – individually and communally. This is something Indigenous peoples have always known, celebrating extended families

and lauding the wisdom of matriarchs as it applied and was transmitted to all the younger generations of a community.

Mothering, understood in this way as a complex web of relational practices, was and is fundamental to life.

This is perhaps also why mothering has often been so threatened while simultaneously holding the potential for (re)building the inherent strengths in our communities. The enforced, large-scale removal of Aboriginal children from families and communities, first through residential schools then through Child Welfare policies beginning in the 1950s and continuing today, have fragmented family and mothering relationships and interrupted the transmission of cultural practices across generations. Despite these devastating impacts, the resiliency of Aboriginal peoples is evident in the vital role of women and mothers in Aboriginal societies and in the resurgence of traditional and contemporary teachings and practices around mothering and child rearing. Strength to move forward as healthy individuals, families and communities is inextricably linked to Aboriginal women, mothers, grandmothers and aunts as the bearers of future generations.

Mothering has the potential to breathe into being new life and new lives. Mothering holds the potential for bettering the lives of all Indigenous people.

The practices of Aboriginal mothering today are undertaken in a context of colonization and its many destructive effects, but also within a resurgence of cultural teachings and



empowerment for many Aboriginal people, families and communities. Remembering and recovering traditional ways of knowing and being occurs alongside and within contemporary Western society. Aboriginal mothering will bridge these two worlds to help the children find a balance. Through reconnecting with cultural practices and teachings, Aboriginal mothers have a powerful role to play in moving towards wellness and healing. That is what we are here to discuss.

We are here today because we believe in the constructive and positive potential of motherhood for the lives and communities of all Indigenous peoples. We are here today to celebrate mothering. I only wish my own mother were here to see her daughter and the mother I have become. It is in her memory that I open this gathering.

Margo Greenwood, Academic Leader,
National Collaborating Centre
for Aboriginal Health

“Mothering, as a relationship and practice, is a social and cultural act that occurs between multiple configurations of people of many generations – individually and communally.”

Margo Greenwood, Academic Leader,
NCCAHA

OBJECTIVES



The overall goal of this gathering is to support mothers, mothers-to-be, and all people who practice mothering in some way, in the care of their children, families, and communities.

We expect to:

- Explore what it means to be a mother
- Identify cultural and Indigenous understandings related to motherhood
- Examine ways in which teachings have been transmitted across the generations in an evolving generational experience from grandmothers to young mothers
- Identify elements of cultural knowledge transmission in successful mothering programs
- Foster networking and information sharing opportunities

SCHEDULE

Arrival Day | January 23, 2012

6:00pm Registration
 Exhibit Set-up

Day One | January 24, 2012

Event facilitated by Dan George

7:30am Registration
 Hot breakfast will be available

8:30am Welcome Messages
 Welcome to the Territory – Elder Dorothy Meness
 Opening Prayer – Elder Paul Skanks
 Welcome to the Event – Margo Greenwood
 Overview of the Event – Dan George





- 9:00am Keynote Address – Maria Campbell
- 9:45am Nutrition Break
- 10:00am Mothers and Daughters Panel
Charlotte Reading and Samantha Loppie
Tanya Davoren and Marlene Beattie
Sarah Takolik and Isabelle Takolik
Comments and Dialogue
- 11:30am Introduce Mothering Programs
Grassroots Grandmother Circle (*Mi'kmaki Nugumijk*), Nova Scotia
Maternal Child Health Program, Northeast Alberta Region
SplatsinTsm7aksaltn Society, British Columbia
- 12:00pm Lunch Presentation – Inuit Throat Singers
- 1:00pm Mothering Across the Generations
Emma Gladue, Diana Steinhauer, Alexis Steinhauer
- 2:15pm Nutrition Break
- 2:30pm Dialogue Circles
· “Who am I?”
· “Why does mothering matter to me?”
· “How do I feel about mothering?”
Facilitators: Karen Isaac, Mary Burgaretta, Diana Steinhauer, Shirley Tagalik,
Farren Marchand, Tanya Davoren, Madeleine Dion Stout, Charlotte Reading,
Cathy Gottfriedson, Margo Greenwood
- 4:00pm Closing Plenary
Closing comments: Participants share insights and learnings
Overview of Day 2
- 4:30pm Adjournment
- 5:30pm Buses depart to Canadian Museum of Civilization
- 6:00pm Cultural Evening: Dinner and Entertainment

Day Two | January 25, 2012

- 7:30am Hot Breakfast
- 8:30am Opening Prayer – Elder Paul Skanks
- 8:40am Recap of Day One
Introduction to Day's Activities
- 8:50am Keynote Address – Jeanette Corbiere Lavell
- 9:35am Nutrition Break
- 9:50am Young Women's Panel
Jocelyn Formsma
Jessica Yee
Lindsay Knight
Jena Merkosak
Gabrielle Legault
Comments and Dialogue
- 11:30am Introduce Mothering Programs
Aboriginal Mother Centre Society, British Columbia
From the Womb to Beyond, New Brunswick
Aboriginal Healthy Babies, Healthy Children (AHBHC) Program, Ontario
Healthy Family Program, Saskatchewan
- 12:00pm Lunch Presentation – Roberta Stout, Lorena Fontaine and Lisa Murdock
Digital Stories: Intergenerational Effects of Residential Schools on
First Nations Women
- 1:00pm Grandmothers Panel
Meeka Alivaktut
Madeleine Dion Stout
Jo Mac Quarrie
Comments and Dialogue
- 2:30pm Nutrition Break
- 2:45pm Review of Mothering Programs
- 3:00pm Plenary Discussion
Where to from here? Informing policy, programs and practice
- 3:45pm Closing Comments – Margo Greenwood
- 4:00pm Closing Prayer



PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Grassroots Grandmother Circle (*Mi'kmaki Nugumijk*)

Doreen Bernard, Indian Brook, Nova Scotia

The Grassroots Grandmother Circle (*Mi'kmaki Nugumijk*) is a community action group of women, grandmothers and mothers who are our future grandmothers, as well as grandfathers and fathers who support the women and any others who want to come together. In the circle, the grandmothers support each other, share experiences, strengths and gifts, and empower each other to create positive change and work together to help the L'nu people, families and communities. The goals of the circle are to provide a safe place for open discussions and sharing of cultural teachings, ceremonies, prayers, life experiences, wisdom, gifts and strengths with one another. The grandmothers offer input into solutions to the many problems and issues that affect families, communities and Mi'kmaq Nation

Learn more at
[www.universalconnections-starwoman.com/
Mi-kma-ki-N-ugumijk.html](http://www.universalconnections-starwoman.com/Mi-kma-ki-N-ugumijk.html)
or 1 902 758 3593



Healthy Families Program

Sandra Favel Rewerts and Heather Beach,
North Battleford, Saskatchewan

The Healthy Families Program was established in 2006 by the Battleford Tribal Council Indian Health Services. The program operates in partnership with a number of other federal initiatives including Aboriginal Headstart, Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program, FASD, Children's Oral Health Initiative, Maternal Child Health and other referral agencies. The Community Health Nurse is the case manager for clients, prenatal parents who each undergo a voluntary strength-based holistic assessment. From this assessment, a case plan is developed and referrals are made as needed. The objectives of the program include increasing the number of women who will access prenatal health services, providing early detection and referral for developmental delays, increasing parent knowledge and skills regarding the developmental and nutritional needs of their children, and providing education, support and counseling to pre- and post-natal women to meet their emotional and mental health needs.

Learn more by contacting Heather or Sandra at 1 306 937 6700

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS



From the Womb to Beyond

Imelda Perley, Tobique First Nation, New Brunswick

From the Womb to Beyond is a culturally based program designed to ensure that the Maliseet language, worldviews, traditions, and ceremonies are promoted among expectant mothers, mothers of newborns, and mothers of young children (ages 0-6). The program also encourages fathers to participate. From the Womb to Beyond celebrates ancestral birth and welcomes the seven generations into the physical world. These traditional teachings prepare parents to accept their responsibility of protecting and guiding their gift of creation, the newborn who journeys from the spirit world into the physical world. The program celebrates the "circle of life" and traditional teachings that accompany each phase of life beginning with conception and continuing to childhood, adolescence, adulthood and Elderhood.

Learn more at 1 506 273 4277
or 1 506 460 8351



Splatsin Tsm7aksaltn (Splatsin Teaching Centre) Society

Deanna Cook, Enderby, British Columbia

The Splatsin Tsm7aksaltn (Splatsin Teaching Centre) Society is a non-profit organization whose mandate is to be an early learning and teaching centre that incorporates the Splatsin language and culture into programming for children aged 0-12 years old, parents, family, and community. The society is a community hub of services offering provincially licensed group child care, Aboriginal Infant Development programs, parent workshops, dental varnishing for children, parent drop-in groups, car seat loan programs, and a resource library for parents. It also offers enhanced child care programming such as yoga, dance, music, language and culture and full hot meals for children. The society has been providing quality child care since 1990.

Learn more at splatsin.com or 1 250 838 6404





Aboriginal Mother Centre Society

Jacque Adams and Marjorie White, Vancouver, British Columbia

The Aboriginal Mother Centre Society began in 2002 to address the needs of Aboriginal women. Located in the east side of Vancouver, in a culturally sensitive environment, the centre provides a food bank program, free clothing, a drop-in centre, a daycare, a community kitchen, office and technical support such as internet and fax access, advocacy and support programs, essential skills and training through social enterprise developments. The centre has developed a strategy to address its goals for the provision of urgently needed housing for Aboriginal women and children, along with numerous supports that foster self-sufficiency.

Learn more at
www.aboriginalmothercentre.ca
or 1 604 558 2627

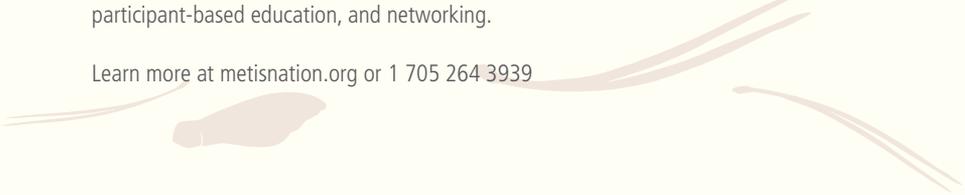


Aboriginal Healthy Babies Healthy Children (AHBHC) Program, Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO)

Shelley Gonneville and Lynne Picotte, Ontario

The MNO AHBHC program is a prevention/intervention strategy for families with children aged 0-6. The goal is to assist all Aboriginal families to provide the best opportunities for healthy development for children through family home visiting and service coordination including referrals. An equally important goal is to ensure that the program addresses the needs of children at risk to ensure that they have access to services and support. The program is voluntary and open to any Aboriginal family that requests service. The focus of the MNO AHBHC program is preparation for parenting, prenatal and postpartum care. There are three distinct components to the program in terms of service delivery: client-based service, participant-based education, and networking.

Learn more at metisnation.org or 1 705 264 3939



PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Maternal Child Health Program, Northeast Alberta Region

Terri Suntjens, Alberta

The Maternal Child Health (MCH) program is designed to take a more proactive, preventative, and supportive approach to promoting and building independent healthy families in First Nations Communities across Alberta. The MCH program is open to pregnant women, mothers, and families with children aged 0-6 years old. The MCH program coordinates with other community programs and provides support, information and linkages. The immediate goal is to improve maternal, infant, child and family health outcomes and the long term goal is to ensure that all children can reach their developmental and lifetime potential. The program offers home visits, support, parenting and literacy courses, and MCH classes that include traditional teachings, basic skills, cooking classes, and various other skill building activities.



Learn more by contacting Laura Cunningham-Shpeley at 1 780 495 2177

“The goals of the circle are to provide a safe place for open discussions and sharing of cultural teachings, ceremonies, prayers, life experiences, wisdom, gifts and strengths with one another.”

Grassroots Grandmother Circle (*Mi'kmaki Nugumijk*)

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Jeannette Corbiere Lavell

President, Native Women's Association of Canada

Jeannette Corbiere Lavell is a strong Anishinabe woman, fluent in her language and culture and a member of the Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve on Manitoulin Island in Ontario.

Dedicated to the causes of Aboriginal women for over 40 years, Ms. Corbiere Lavell challenged gender discrimination in the *Indian Act*, going to the Supreme Court of Canada to ensure equality for Aboriginal women in the early 1970s. She is a founding member and past president of several Aboriginal women's organizations, including the Ontario Native Women's Association, Indigenous Women of the Americas, Anduhyaun, a Native women's residence and was interim president of the Native Women's Association of Canada in the 1980s.

Ms. Corbiere Lavell has worked tirelessly as a teacher and school principal, education and employment counselor, accomplished advocate, cabinet appointee, and consultant on matters related to law, justice, equality and Indian status. She is the co-editor of a book, *Until Our Hearts Are on the Ground: Aboriginal Mothering, Oppression, Resistance and Rebirth*. Ms. Corbiere Lavell has also served on many boards of directors, has worked to advance issues of concern for Aboriginal women in Canada and internationally, and has been awarded with numerous awards, honours and distinctions.

In 1987, the Ontario Native Women's Association established the Jeannette Corbiere Lavell Award, "to be presented annually to a deserving Native woman demonstrating the same qualities and dedication as Jeannette." In 1995, Ms. Corbiere Lavell was awarded the YWCA Women of Distinction Award. In 2008, Ms. Corbiere Lavell was appointed the first Anishinabek Nation Commissioner on Citizenship. In September 2009, Ms. Corbiere Lavell was elected to a three-year term as President of the Native Women's Association. In October 2009, Ms. Corbiere Lavell was presented with the Governor General's Award in Commemoration of the Persons Case, which honours individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the advancement of women's equality.

Jeannette Corbiere Lavell is a proud mother of three and grandmother of five.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Maria Campbell

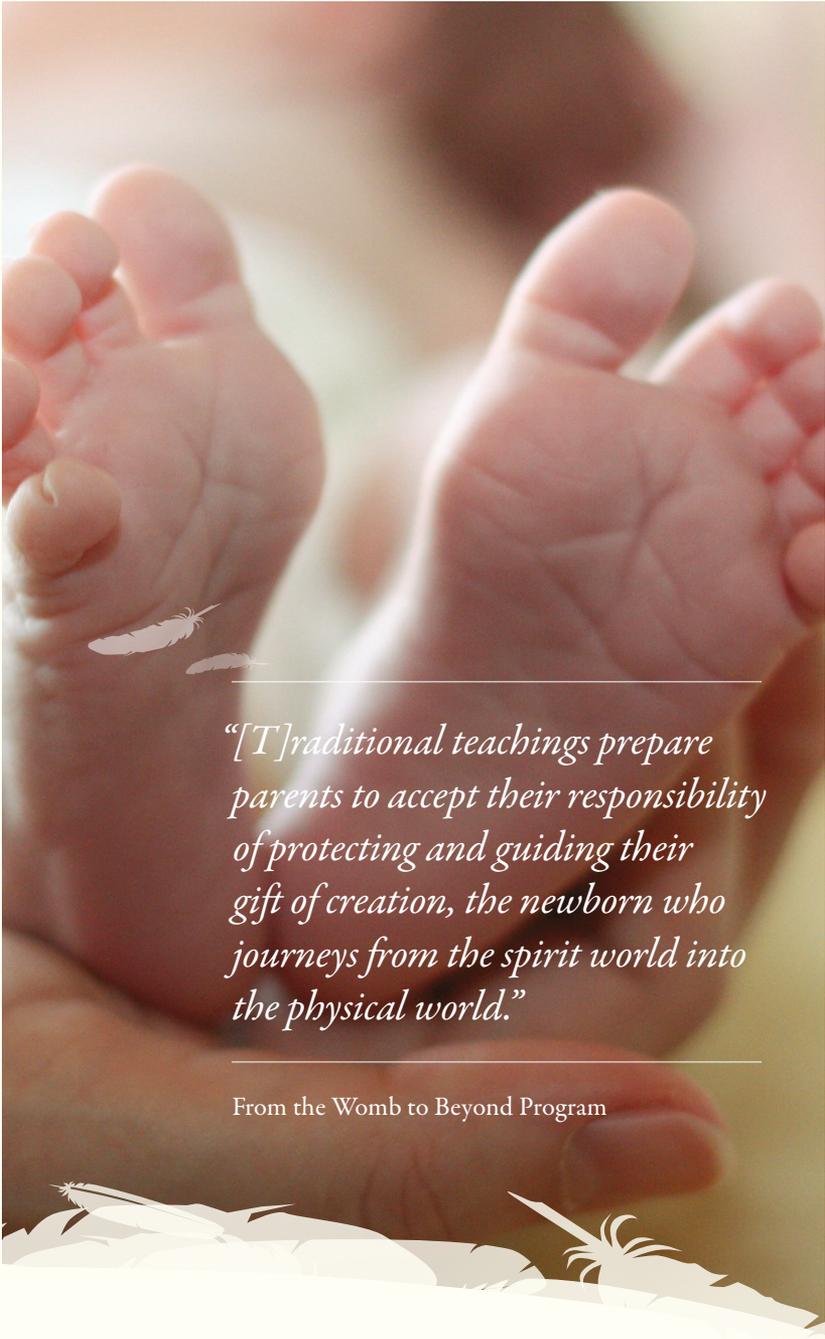
Maria Campbell is an author, playwright, filmmaker, researcher, educator and Cree/Métis Elder from Saskatchewan. Her publications include *Halfbreed* (1973), *The Book of Jessica* (1987) and *Stories of the Road Allowance People* (1995). Among her plays, *Jessica* won the 1986 Dora Mavor Moore National Award for Playwriting, and *The Crossing* won the 2008 Spirit of Saskatchewan Award. In film and television work, Ms. Campbell has produced and directed over 35 documentaries, mostly in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples.

Ms. Campbell's artistic work has always been grounded in social justice and a commitment to community. She has been doing volunteer work for over 40 years, working mostly with women and children in crisis. Her work has included being one of the founders of the First Women's Halfway House as well as the Women and Children's Emergency Crisis Centre in Edmonton; working with youth in community theatre; setting up food and housing co-ops; facilitating women's circles; and doing workshops on leadership and community organizing. Ms. Campbell was the translator and helper for the "Elders' Blockade" to stop logging in traditional Cree territory in Northern Saskatchewan in the 1990s. She has also worked with the Lubicon Lake First Nations in their struggle for land claims.

Awards for Ms. Campbell include an Officer of The Order of Canada, a Saskatchewan Order of Merit, a Canada Council Molson Award, and a National Aboriginal Achievement Award. Ms. Campbell holds four honorary doctorates and is a former professor from the University of Saskatchewan and First Nations University of Canada. She has held several writer-in-residence positions and is currently the Elder in Virtual Residence at the Centre for World Indigenous Knowledge, Athabasca University. She is also a co-applicant on two national research projects and a Trudeau Mentor.

She has four children and is a grandmother of seven and great-grandmother of four.





“[T]raditional teachings prepare parents to accept their responsibility of protecting and guiding their gift of creation, the newborn who journeys from the spirit world into the physical world.”

From the Womb to Beyond Program

