



**NAWN**

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February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Re: Budget Submission of the Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network

To: The Honourable Ross Wiseman, Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board

The Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network is now in its tenth (10) year of advocacy on behalf of Aboriginal women on the island portion of Newfoundland and Labrador. Our organization is made up of seven (7) Aboriginal women's Associations with a combined membership of 783. We also provide resources to various groups working with Aboriginal women in Labrador.

First, we would like to acknowledge, that organizational support from your government has allowed us to continue our work at the community level. Operational funding has allowed us to leverage \$ 173,448.00 in project funding for the last fiscal year and \$ 153,500.00 for the 2015-2016 fiscal year. This funding has and will, allow us to continue our culturally-based violence awareness and prevention workshops with Aboriginal women, men, youth and Elders. It has also allowed us to support leadership development and has assisted our organization to move into the area of economic security and financial preparedness for some of the most disadvantaged women across our island.

One of our current projects, is allowing us to work toward institutional change that will provide economic security for Aboriginal women in two (2) of our local communities. We recognize that the ability to move women out of poverty must be gained through partnership with those who have the ability to support their needs and ideas.

We are also delivering a series of culturally-based violence awareness and prevention workshops on the Port au Port Peninsula and Healing Circles in communities serviced by our affiliate associations. Throughout our work in the communities, we continue to hear the stress in the voices of those suffering from different forms of violence, as well as concerns around an increase in drug use, unemployment, mental health issues, and the supports needed to access educational opportunities.

Our organization is very aware of the looming economic crisis and the difficult choices you must make with regard to financial support of organizations such as ours, while ensuring core areas such as health and education, receive all the resources they need to service our residents. No one

understands budgets better than non-profits who struggle to provide for those who can't speak for themselves.

As we face uncertain economic conditions, it is important to remember that the people who are currently most disadvantaged, will be the ones to suffer the most in times of economic restraints. Without support at the community level for these individuals, we will see an increase in petty crime, mental health issues and all the physical effects that poverty brings.

Funding through the Poverty Reduction Strategy has increased the amount of real work that is being done at the community level, where it is needed most, but there is still a great deal to be done.

As I look around the table, I see other community-based organizations, whose missions are aligned with ours. The wealth and health of our communities is based on the health of its residents, whether it is their mental, physical, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

A sense of identity, belonging, and safety, along with the ability to be a part of the economic success of our province, can only be achieved through combined efforts at the community level.

Any loss of support for community-based agencies will be felt not only by the people they support, but also by the other organizations they partner with.

We are also submitting a recent report by Dr. Jocelyn Thorpe which outlines the work undertaken by our organization over the last eight (8) years and its impact on Aboriginal women in the province.

In closing, we wish to thank you for allowing the voices of Aboriginal women to be heard.

Respectively  
Sandra Wells  
Executive Director