

Commission on the Status of Women 61 CSW (2017)  
Brief Report  
Institute for International Women's Rights - Manitoba (IIWR-MB)

IIWR-MB received ECOSOC status from the United Nations in July, 2016, giving the non profit, provincially incorporated organization the ability to attend special UN meetings, such as the CSW. The meetings of the CSW, held in New York, have become an important vehicle for women, and their allies, to meet, to collaborate, and to take global action, supporting the rights of women.

IIWR-MB, in cooperation with IIWR Global College, has also raised funds through the Local to Global events to support students attending Global College at the University of Winnipeg to participate in special UN events, such as the meetings of the CSW. This made a big difference to two of the delegation members.

This was the first delegation of members of IIWR-MB to attend the CSW, although several of the delegates had attended meetings of the CSW in the past, with other accredited NGOs. The major theme of the meeting was the economic empowerment of women, and the outcome document definitely reflects the work that needs to be done to bring women's paid income up to a fair living wage and equal to men's. But the 'emerging theme', the empowerment of Indigenous Women, was what IIWR-MB wanted to focus on, and possibly present at the CSW. This we did, thanks to the remarkable women who formed the panel, with support from all delegates. And members of the delegation participated in various events, including the Youth forum.

A general call for members who might be interested in attending the meetings of the CSW was issued in the fall of 2016. There was a meeting of those who might be interested, plus a discussion as to a possible parallel event. Realizing the emerging theme was the Empowerment of Indigenous Women, there was discussion as to possible topics. Diane Redsky was very supportive and suggested the topic *Risks for Canadian Indigenous Women Transitioning to an Urban Environment*. She contacted MKO, Ndinwe, Ma Mawi and Chiefs from Treaty Three. Shauna Fontaine, from SCO, participated and shared the work of the Protecting Our Women program. In all, the following organizations partnered with the submission for the parallel event, which was accepted - Ma Mawi Chi Itata Centre Inc.; Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.(MKO); Treaty Three and Mitaanjigamiing First Nation; Southern Chiefs First Nation, and Ndinawemaagang Endaawaad Inc. We found out later that there were probably more than one hundred proposals that weren't accepted. We were happy to welcome IIWR Global College as a sponsor, as they picked up printing costs for the postcards and the posters, beautifully designed by Renata Meconse. Special thanks to Christine Williams, who adapted the poster for the postcard.

Katrina Leclerc offered to coordinate the youth/student delegates, in particular their role as rapporteurs during the event. This was very helpful to organize the social media and the actual recording of the program.

There were several meetings of all those interested in attending plus others who might be interested in the future. Updates and information was shared, and there were 16 registrations by the cut off date of January 9. All delegates were responsible for their own costs.

These included:

16 Members of the IIWR-MB Delegation:

Micaela Crighton

Alexandria Kazmerik

Katrina Leclerc

Christine Williams

Brittany McIntosh

Chief Janice Henderson

Deborah Lipscombe

Tammy Christensen

Sidonia Deng

Grand Chief Sheila North -Wilson

Renata Meconse

Teruni Walaliyadde

Angeline Rivard

Margaret MacKinnon

Mary Scott

Shauna Fontaine/Chief Karen Batson

IIWR-MB also nominated Dana Connelly, VP Youth, as a member of the official Canadian delegation. We were disappointed she was not selected, but apparently there were many nominations this year.

Following is a very brief summary of the meetings, the outcomes, and the program that was presented, *Risks for Indigenous Women Transitioning to an Urban Environment*.

1. The biggest annual gathering of activists on women's issues from all parts of the world converged at the United Nations, in New York, from March 13 to March 24, 2017. The 16 member IIWR-MB delegation was there for the first week, with the panel presentation held on the first day, Monday, March 13. We were happy with the date, and time, as the next day, which had been given to us originally, would have meant we would not have presented at all, as there was an incredible snow storm and the UN was totally shut down.
2. The gathering is the regular session of the Commission on the Status of Women. This year it was the Commission's 61st session (UN CSW 61). Many of the participants at these sessions have direct grassroots connections with their feet on the ground, like IIWR-MB, and understand the challenges and obstacles – physical, economic, political, societal, cultural and attitudinal – which women face on a daily basis. Much of the learning that happens at the CSW happens in informal conversations with others.
3. There is a Government-Civil Society disconnect which strikes many of the attendees, especially first timers. Official business is going on, inside the UN, but NGOs are

talking and meeting in premises outside of the UN. Of course this year, with the ban by the US government on 6 countries, there was considerable support for the UN to take action. Many events had an unfilled chair, as witness to those that could not attend. As a matter of fact, NGOs demanded, and received, a special meeting with the Secretary General to discuss their concerns. It will be interesting to see what, if any, actions, the UN might take to permit all delegates, who have appropriately registered, to attend official UN meetings held at the UN in New York.

4. The official Canadian delegation was helpful, and we were all invited to the official reception, with the Minister Status of Women, Hon. Mariam Monsef. Changes to the official outcome document were invited. Senator McPhedran supported the delegation in numerous ways, and briefed the delegates on Monday morning. Minister Carolyn Bennett was not able to attend the IIWR-MB Panel, because of weather, but her Parliamentary Secretary, Dan Vandal, did attend. Margaret Buist, director general of Child and Family Services Branch of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, brought the greetings on behalf of the Minister. The president of the Native Women's Association of Canada, Francyne Joe attended and we all had a chance to speak to her.
5. This year's Commission drew the attendance of 162 Member States, including 89 representatives at the Ministerial level, like Canada. More than 3,900 representatives from 580 civil society organizations came to New York from 138 countries, attesting to the growing strength and unity of women's voices around the world.
6. Yes, the UN premises and its neighbourhoods were bustling with these CSW participants, but most of them were outside the conference room where the formal deliberations on the agenda of the Commission's annual session were taking place. Most of them were frequenting the four dispersed locations, including the Community Church where our event was held, outside the UN building. The NGOs organized 450 parallel events, with eminent contributions on wide-ranging issues having significance and relevance for women and for the humanity as a whole. Many of the delegates attended these parallel events on a range of topics. A highlight for me was to attend a session on some of the current challenges facing Afghanistan, and a lunch following with Dr. Sima Samar.
7. Special acknowledgement and appreciation to Renata Meconse and Grand Chief Sheila North Wilson. The news release, issued in time for International Women's Day, was picked up by several local media, including the CBC. Several outlets, including the Winnipeg Free Press arranged interviews while we were in New York. Special thanks to Renata Meconse for supporting the media outreach and Grand Chief Sheila North Wilson for responding with great interviews.
8. The panel presentation *Risks for Indigenous Women Transitioning to an Urban Environment* had a standing room only crowd. Many sat on the floor, and although we brought in additional chairs, we had to turn away some who would have liked to stay. Micaela Crighton had prepared the hand out of bios of each of the presenters that included a photo and contact information. Each member of the team wore the TRC logo pin.
9. A full report of the presentation is being prepared by the rapporteurs and will be available shortly. It was live streamed, although the wifi was not strong enough to

provide a steady signal. A very warm thankyou to the presenters and partners who supported the panel:

The panel included Margaret MacKinnon - Ma Mawi Chi Itata Centre Inc.; Grand Chief Sheila North Wilson - Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. (MKO); Chief Janice Henderson - Mitaanjigamiing First Nation (Treaty Three); Chief Karen Batson - Pine Creek First Nation (Southern Chiefs Organization) and Tammy Christensen - Ndinawemaagang Endaawaad Inc. Micaela Crighton did an excellent job with facilitating and managing the power point presentations.

Please check out:

UN Women CSW - <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw61-2017>

Agreed Coclusions -

<https://www.ngocsw.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Agreed-Conclusions.pdf>

Facebook -

<https://www.facebook.com/InstituteInternationalWomensRightsManitoba/>

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