

Provincial Council of Women of Manitoba (PCWM) Gala, June 14, 2019

Not Afraid to Get My Hands Dirty Award Recipients 2019

Ashley Daniels, Jenny Lay, Jamileh Naso, Brittany McIntosh and Kim Fontaine

Five amazing women brought the issues faced by Manitoba young people affected by the social protection system to the world's attention through a panel presentation at the United Nation's Commission on the Status of Women in the spring of 2019. Their collective action raised awareness, offered direction for positive change, and challenged the assumptions of the powerful. The diversity among them in background, story, and perspective is the hopeful face of today and of the future.

Ashley Daniels, Youth Chief Youth Chief for the Southern Chiefs' Organization, is a proud Dakota Ojibway woman, with ties to Sioux Valley Dakota Nation and a member of the Swan Lake Nation. Ashley is proud of the strong women mentors who empower her to represent her community. She has won awards from the University of Manitoba, where she is studying, acknowledging her leadership role. "Now I am dreaming big. Youth voices need to be at the centre, need to be at the *big* tables at the UN, so our voice is heard. This is motivation for that goal."

Jenny Lay is from Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation in Northern Manitoba. Now in Winnipeg and having completed a degree in psychology, she works in disability and employment counselling. From a young age Jenny was in the care of the child protection system and her dynamic political and social analysis of the issues are rooted in her lived experience. Jenny's story is one of resilience against the odds. The protective love of her sister, an aptitude for learning and the support of a few individuals in the system were key to her survival. "I share my story to promote resilience and the will to succeed, especially in Indigenous women and girls."

Jamileh Naso is a Yazidi refugee from Iraq, who came to Canada with her family at the age of 4. She has been instrumental in Operation Ezra, a community wide, multi-faith initiative to sponsor and resettle Yazidi refugees in Winnipeg. She will graduate this fall with a degree in Political Science and Human Rights from the University of Winnipeg. "The news doesn't cover the positive stories, so to share your work, and be supported by others as you hear about their struggles, and successes, is very uplifting. Our voices are making a difference!"

Brittany McIntosh balances her work with vulnerable and violence affected youth at NorWest Co-op Community Health Centre with studies in Social Work at Booth College. She has an impressive resume of activity in local and international initiatives to empower women economically and politically. "As many as half of people in violent relationships are young, and the social protection system is not prepared. Youth don't have to wait until they are formally in power to see standards change. We are speaking out now."

Kim Fontaine, Program Support Coordinator for Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, moderated the panel presentation. Kim has dedicated her life and work to advocating for a just and safe world for Indigenous women and girls. She is the proud mother of 4 beautiful Ojibway children. "You can get your head

down with the day to day and not see the horizon, but I was so proud of the 4 young women [at the Commission]; they are shifting the horizon and it is powerful.”

The Not Afraid to Get My Hands Dirty award is intended for a Manitoba woman/girl who has recently demonstrated a creative activist response to an identified injustice, in an attempt to bring about social or political change for women. Uniquely this year, we are honouring 5 women whose work together was outstanding.

The award was established in 2013 by UNPAC (United Nations Platform for Action Committee, Manitoba) to honour the long time service of their Executive Director, Jennifer De Groot. UNPAC provided leadership to the province following the 1995 United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing, with a particular focus on women’s economic literacy. When UNPAC closed its doors in 2014, the responsibility for continuing the annual award was taken up by the Provincial Council of Women Manitoba. PCWM is a federation of organizations and individuals whose purpose is to improve social conditions by influencing political decision-making and public attitudes. (pcwmanitoba.ca)

Other recipients:

- *2013 Jennifer de Groot*
- *2014 Debbie Patterson*
- *2015 Lynda Trono*
- *2016 Aurora Andrews*
- *2017 Humaira Jaleel*
- *2018 Ray Eskritt*

The award will be presented at the Celebrating Women Gala, Friday, June 14, 2019. Tickets are available through pcwmanitoba.ca or info@pcwmanitoba.ca