

NEWSLETTER

Liard Aboriginal Women's Society (LAWS)

January 2020



Dear Community Members



Liard Aboriginal Women's Society (LAWS) is excited to share some of our community's proud moments from 2019 in this newsletter. LAWS, alongside Youth, local organizations, Elders and community members launched **two new community empowerment projects** to address gender-based violence and build **community safety, advocacy and justice**.

Ts'ídāne á' nezen?: Youth for Dignity in Relationships

A Youth empowerment project for students at Watson Lake Secondary School, designed to build community safety and justice.



Gūdené'K'éh Gūs'ānī: Building a Circle of Dignity and Justice

Building a team of Advocates who are anti-violence leaders that support, respond to, and help restore dignity and safety among those harmed by violence.

"Youth are young teachers...We are never too old to learn something new." - Elder

"We need to speak up. We need Advocates here in this community so people get justice." - Advocate

Empowerment



Dena Au Nazen
Kaska principles of
dignity and respect

"I'm glad to see our people coming together again. It is powerful to see community come together." – Elder



**Partnerships &
Collaboration**



**Youth &
Advocate Led**



**Response Based
Practice**



**Kaska
Culture**



Welcome to our Newsletter!

Look inside to learn more about these Projects and to see our Youth and Advocates in action...

Ts'ídāne ā' nezen?: Youth for Dignity in Relationships Project Dates: 2019 – 2023

- Youth for Safety ran from 2015-2017 and was a great success. We now have funding to run the program for 4 more years!
- This project recognizes the need for active female and male Youth participation in addressing issues of violence against young women and girls.
- Youth at Watson Lake Secondary School (WLSS) will participate in workshops throughout the school year facilitated by Renee Claude Carrier and Julie Laliberte who facilitated Youth for Safety- welcome back!
- The workshops will help Youth gain the knowledge and skills to take on leadership roles in promoting safety and justice within the community, and learn ways of restoring and preserving dignity of those who experience violence.

This year, we have 24 AMAZING Youth taking part in Youth for Dignity!

"I can say that every student who has been in YFS, they have learned and gained something from it. It is so important to learn how to protect their dignity. That will have an influence on who they will hang out with and their families. It spreads. One small pebble can make a difference." – Teacher



"Learning about sexism really opened my eyes. It gives me a higher respect. Women have different experiences. It's a side of the story I haven't heard before." –Youth

What are Youth for Dignity participants learning about?

Supporting their peers
Dignity or Dene Ā' Nezen
Communication
Teambuilding
Planning campaigns and events together
Trust and teamwork
Gendered violence
Positive and negative social responses
Oppression
Activism and Social Action
The power of language
Victim blaming
Concealing violence
Celebrating their hard work

December 6 National day of Remembrance and Action

On Friday, December 6, Youth and Advocates led a powerful vigil for Canada's National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, at the Multi-purpose room in Watson Lake Secondary School. Elder Leda Jules gave the opening prayer; Caely Burdes and Carla Boss were MCs for the moving ceremony. Remarks from Ann Mage Raider, Chief George Morgan, Daniel Dick and others inspired the 106 people attending the gathering. Adult and Youth advocates stood together to lead the closing Women's Warrior Song and drum circle.



Project Dates: 2019-2024

- This project will help to address gender-based violence by training a team of Advocates who are working to create change so women and children feel safer and supported. Seeing the injustices in their community and wanting to do something about it is what led people to the group.
- Advocates will receive trainings in response-based practice from Dr. Allan Wade and Dr. Shelly Bonnah and learn about Kaska Dena principles, protocols and teachings of dignity, justice and healing.
- Being out on the land at Frances Lake (Tu Cho), connecting with others, finding a safe place to share, learning new tools to deal with situations, being a strong voice for others, leading their own advocacy projects, culture, traditions, beading, hunting, and working with Elders all contribute to personal growth and the development of their advocacy skills.
- There is a Circle of Support (i.e. LAWS, Elders, Project Coordinator, staff at local agencies, schools and organizations) to support Advocates and this important work.

We welcome 23 inspiring Advocates to the Program!

What is an Advocate?



**"Advocates
can help
individuals,
but they can
also help
politically."
- Partner**

"I'm glad to be here with this really big group of strong brave women." - Advocate



The project is based on the following 6 pillars:



5th Vigil

on against Violence against Women

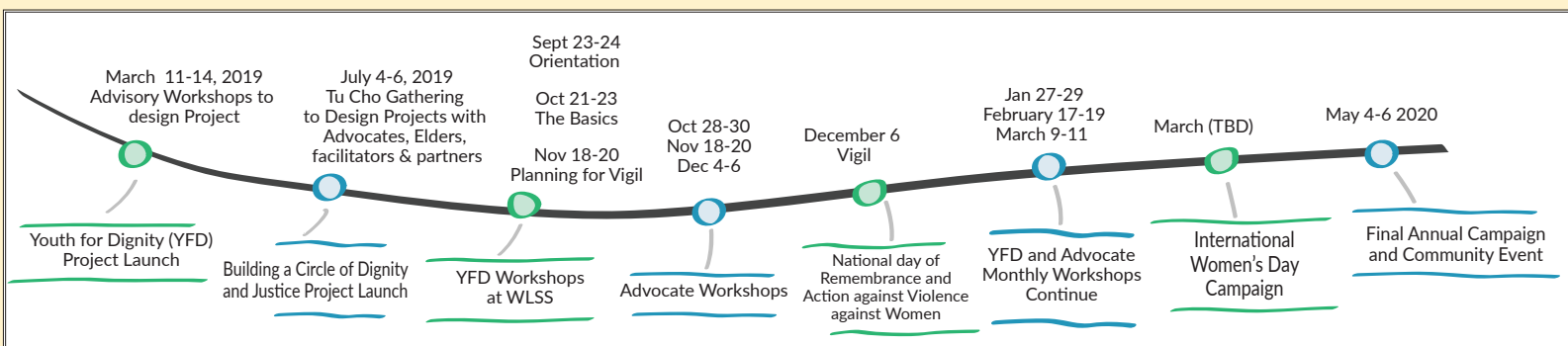
Violence against Indigenous women has to end
and it starts with each of us." - Advocate



"I'm so proud of the students...taking risks and stepping out of your comfort zones; you all did really well today and you stepped forward for all those women whose voices were lost; I am so proud to be a Kaska woman and I have joy in my heart!" - Elder

2019-2020 Project Milestones

The timeline below highlights the key activities throughout 2019 and 2020. there will be more campaigns, events and opportunities to get involved in ahead. We will continue to add to this timeline throughout the projects.



What is Response Based Practice?

Both projects are based on response-based practice (RBP).

Response-based practice (RBP) has a foundation in social justice and human rights. It has been proven to be effective in diverse situations as it acknowledges the systematic nature of violence. It works to preserve dignity, moving beyond traditional victimizing language and acknowledges an individual's physical and emotional **resistance** to violent assault.

"Whenever people are abused, they do many things to oppose the abuse and to keep their dignity and their self-respect. This is called resistance. The resistance might include not doing what the perpetrator wants them to do, standing up against, and trying to stop or prevent violence, disrespect, or oppression. Imagining a better life may also be a way that victims resist abuse."

(Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter, 2007)

Social responses refer to how family, friends, police medical professionals, counsellors, media, government, the public respond after someone reports violence. **Believing people is crucial.**

To learn more visit: www.responsebasedpractice.com

Community Voices

Dignity is safety, dignity is care, dignity is safe touch. Dignity is fundamental to human interaction and to a person's well-being. - Partner

Helping girls learn about their boundaries and how to love and respect one another. - Youth



You need to know who you are and where you come from." - Elder

We have to engage the community in prevention. I honour this work and want to support it any way possible. – Agency partner

We all need each other. - Advocate

I feel very hopeful seeing all of those young kids at the vigil today. Many of them will be the future leaders in this community. - Elder

Indigenous women have taken on the role of challenging the colonial code. Through advocacy, Indigenous people are saying enough is enough, they are protecting their land and people.

- Advocate



We would like to acknowledge the many Youth, Elders, staff at agencies and organizations, facilitators, partners, family and community members who contributed to the vision for these projects, and are now making them a reality. We are so grateful and look forward to continue working together in solidarity.

**SOUGA SIŊLĀ
THANK YOU**

To learn more visit:
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