

# MONTANA NATIVE WOMEN'S COALITION

## 2019 Spring Conference Speakers



### MARIA CAMPBELL

Maria is an oral historian, writer, playwright, filmmaker and activist. She has worked as a volunteer with women and children in crisis for over 45 years and until ten years ago she had a volunteer Safe House for children and youth in her home. She is the National Advising Elder for (Walking With Our Sisters (WWOS))

Maria has published seven books, her first book, Halfbreed was published in 1973 and is being re-released this November. A new book, Keetsahnak, Our Missing and Murdered Indigenous Sisters, co-edited with Kim Anderson and Christi Belcourt, was published last spring (2018) and is available in all bookstores. Maria is currently working on a new book on the history of violence against Indigenous women based on the research she did during her three-year Trudeau Fellowship with the University of Ottawa. She is working on a new play, a collective titled The Inquiry, with Director Yvette Nolin, Law professor Marilyn Poitres and Historian Cheryl Troupe.

Maria is the Elder in Virtual Residence at the Centre for World Indigenous Knowledge and Research, Athabasca University, Edmonton, Alberta. The Cultural Advisor for the College of Law at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. and for The Gwenna Moss Teaching Centre also at the University of Saskatchewan. She has received numerous awards and honors among them a National Aboriginal Achievement Award, A Trudeau Fellowship, a Stanley Knowles Scholarship and she is an Officer of the Order of Canada.

Maria is a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. She speaks Cree, Saulteaux and Michif.

### TOPIC:



### MEREDITH MCCONNELL - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HEALING HEARTS

Meredith is a member of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe and lives in Busby with her family. She is married and has six children. Meredith earned her BA in psychology from MSU-Billings (formally Eastern Montana College) in 1991 with a minor in Native American Studies. She has worked for the Northern Cheyenne Tribe for the past 26 years in various programs and offices including, the Recovery Center, Prosecution Office, the human services department, the elderly program, the Tribal Housing Authority, the Tribe's school, Chief Dull Knife College, and currently is the director of Healing Hearts, the Tribe's domestic violence program.

Meredith's life-line aspiration was to help people. In this regard, Meredith has been serving for the past four years as a member of the board of directors for the Coalition, the last two years of which she has served as chairwoman.



## **LINDA BEARCRANE COUTURE, MSW - SUPERVISORY VICTIM SPECIALIST, BIA OFFICE OF JUSTICE**

A Crow tribal member, Linda graduated from MSU-Billings in 1995 with a BS in Human Services with an emphasis on crime control, social problems and addiction. She began her career at the Yellowstone County Attorney's Office and developed its domestic violence program in the early 1990's. In 1995, she was hired as a victim witness assistant where her main caseload consisted of violent crime including felony sexual assault victims and crimes against children.

Linda began her career in federal service as a victim witness specialist in September, 1999, for the US Department of Justice in the US Attorney's Office, District of Montana. Linda was responsible for federal criminal cases where victims were identified and which included Indian country cases. Much of her caseload consisted of child abuse, internet crimes against children, violent crimes in Indian country, and white collar crimes. While still continuing to provide services to victims of crime within the US Department of Justice, Linda earned a Masters in Social Work degree in August, 2006.

In September, 2008, Linda began working for BIA-Office of Justice Services, as BIA's first Victim Services Coordinator in District V (Billings, Montana) under the Division of Drug Enforcement. Linda developed BIA's first victim assistance program and continues to assist in the development of this program. In addition, Linda is a part-time adjunct instructor for Walla Walla University's (Billings campus) Masters in Social Work Clinical Program.



## **DR. JENNIFER E. MILLER - PROFESSOR OF MORAL THEOLOGY**

Jennifer is Cajun by birth, completed graduate degrees at the Pontifical Universities of the Angelicum and the Gregorian, studying as well at the John Paul II Pontifical Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family in Rome. In 2013, she obtained her doctorate from the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome. Her thesis was on Catholic social doctrine, which combined her love of the family with her strong desire to better address poverty. Former coordinator of studies at "The Markets, Culture and Ethics Research Centre," she has taught and published in English and in Italian. Dr. Miller is currently a professor of moral theology at Notre Dame Seminary, Graduate School of Theology in New Orleans. Along with courses on Catholic Feminism and Gender Identity, Dr. Miller also works to raise awareness on sex trafficking in New Orleans and to help educate young women in Nicaragua. She is presently engaged in pioneering Scriptural and cultural research for a book on "a theology of masculinity and femininity."

Speech Topic: Created to Be Loved: Understanding Women's Dignity:

Many women struggle with believing that they are worthy of love. This is especially true of women who have been abused, assaulted, or trafficked. By examining their lives in the light of being created to be loved, survivors and victims have been able to better understand their own dignity.

Quote: "You were created to be loved."



## **DENISE ARMSTRONG – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF BIG SKY SENIOR SERVICES**

Denise joined Big Sky Senior Services as the Executive Director October 2009. Previously she worked in the marketing field for banks and credit unions. Denise also served on the Senior Helping Hands Board of Directors for 15 years and the Prevention of Elder Abuse Board for 10 years. She graduated from Montana State University – Billings in 1996 with a BS in Business Administration.



### **SHERYL SMART- PROGRAM MANAGER FOR PREVENTION OF ELDER ABUSE**

Sheryl graduated from MSU-Billings in 1997 with a BS in Human Services. Since this time she has been employed within Yellowstone and surrounding counties including the Cheyenne and Crow reservations. She has served as Case Manager for HRDC, Rimrock Foundation and Second Chance Homes. In addition, she has worked in the banking industry. Her education and experience has allowed her to become the Program Manager for Prevention of Elder Abuse. She enjoys being Representative Payee and Program Manager for seniors as well as individuals with disabilities. She is also confident that all programs within Big Sky Senior Services serve our clients with integrity and respect.



### **CARMEN O'LEARY - DIRECTOR OF NATIVE WOMEN'S SOCIETY OF THE GREAT PLAINS**

Carmen is a citizen and a resident of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe where she has gathered her experience and expertise to develop programs that serve native women experiencing violence. Carmen is a trainer on advocacy for those experiencing sexual assault and domestic violence. She is a certified trainer with the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center for Law Enforcement on Domestic Violence. Carmen has worked at providing insight on Tribal Codes in relation to sexual assault, domestic violence and the issuance of protection order.

During the year 2000 she worked as a consultant for the State Court Association in providing training on full faith and credit to Judges and court state on the VAWA provision. She has worked as a Social Services aide in a hospital setting, as a Child Protection Worker, and as the coordinator for the Women's Shelter for seventeen years. Carmen is a Tribal Legal Lay advocate for the Cheyenne River Tribal court and has served as a part time magistrate for Tribal court. She has facilitated reeducation classes for Domestic violence Offenders and also for Women's support groups and Adults Molested as Children. Carmen has served on the VAWA 904 Research Task Force, is the regional representative for the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center where she is the Vice Chair, and is on the Sacred Heart Center board, a local program that governs the women's shelter and an adolescent program. Carmen volunteers as a Guardian Ad Litem for children in the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal court.



### **MARILYN POITRAS**

Marilyn is Michif-Irish from the prairies. She is a student of Indigenous legal traditions and has worked on issues of ancestral domain or traditional territory and traditional law for much of her career.

Marilyn has worked and taught with many traditional teachers, Cree, Dene, Saulteaux, Michif and Inuit within Canada and the Pueblo and Navajo in the USA. She works within community to create, discuss and design opportunities for Indigenous participation in the Canadian politic, in rural and urban issues and on inclusion of Indigenous voice, philosophy and laws in as many places as possible.

Marilyn received her J.D. from the University of Saskatchewan and LL.M. from Harvard Law School. She worked at the University of Saskatchewan from 2004-2018 in Agriculture and in Law. In 2017 she stepped down as a Commissioner to the National Inquiry for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls created by the Canadian government.



### **DR. CYNTHIA BREWER**

Cynthia grew up in Helena and completed her undergraduate studies at MSU-Bozeman. After medical school she returned with her family to Montana in 2009. She is employed at Billings Clinic in the Department of Family Medicine. She started a sexual abuse clinic about 4 years ago which has now expanded to include physical abuse as well. In this role, she participates in the multi-disciplinary team for the Yellowstone Valley Children's Advocacy Center. She is the Medical Director of the SANE program and is happy to share information about what we are doing as a community to help victims of trauma.



### **DEBORAH RUSSELL, LCSW**

Deborah is enrolled Northern Cheyenne who is half Gros Ventre and grew up in Lame Deer, MT. She currently is the Health Administrator for Billings Urban Indian Health and Wellness Clinic. Ms. Russell has been a Licensed Clinical Social Worker since 2002 and has been helping Native people since she graduated with her Masters of Social Work in 1995. Ms. Russell served as the Domestic Violence Task Force team leader from 2003-2015 and was an active SART member at the Crow/Northern Cheyenne hospital. She and her team successfully lobbied Crow legislators for a Domestic Violence law on the Crow reservation which passed in 2005. Ms. Russell also provides Behavioral Health Integrated services to individuals referred to her from BUIHWC Primary Outpatient Care and BUIHWC Chemical Dependency program. Deborah is an experienced clinician who helps individuals empower themselves to achieve success. She believes that every problem is an opportunity to better yourself!



### **JADI JO LONGMIRE – STUDENT, PURDUE UNIVERSITY, NALOXONE TRAINER**

Jadi has a strong heritage of the Blackfeet, Piikani, Salish, and Pend d'Oreille nations. She was born to a Blackfeet mother and adopted into a Salish and Pend d'Oreille family prior to her first birthday. Jadi jo was raised on the Flathead Indian Reservation in the town of Polson and on the west shore of Flathead Lake. Her parents continue to live in Polson and Jadi jo and her fifteen year old daughter now live in Billings.

Jadi jo had a challenging teenaged life and early adulthood which included addiction and time in jail. In hindsight, she recognized that her addiction was used to deal with historical trauma and to numb pain. She understands that this was done at the expense of her physical, emotional and mental health. Just as importantly, Jadi jo also understands that the relationships in her life also suffered due to the addiction.

Eventually, Jadi jo realized that she wanted to create a better life for her daughter and herself. The road to this better life included returning to school, going to college and ultimately earning three degrees in fine arts, pre-nursing, and psychology with the goal of becoming a psychiatric nurse. Presently, Jadi jo is currently in master's program for clinical psychology at Purdue University in addition to becoming an expert on substance abuse disorder.

She has also become a master level trainer about the proper use of naloxone, a medication used to help prevent fatalities resulting from drug overdoses. As a naloxone trainer, Jadi jo teaches first responders, law enforcement officers, and jail staff in holding facilities how to administer naloxone. Consequently, Jadi jo is passionate about the work she does and her personal mission to save lives.



## **PENNY RONNING – BILLINGS CITY COUNCIL WOMAN**

Having lived and traveled throughout the world, Penny's commitment to the arts, social justice, and protecting wildlife habitat is reflected in her more than 30 years of professional and volunteer service. She has initiated and helped secure more than \$20 million dollars in combined monetary, pledged, and other sponsorship acquisitions for multiple nonprofit organizations. As a business owner and resident of Livingston, MT, she successfully served as the president of the Livingston Downtown Association and has served on the Board of Advisors and Development Committee of the Missoula, MT based Vital Ground Foundation since 2005.

In 2004, she created and co-founded HATCH, a non-profit organization based in Bozeman, MT dedicated to creating a better world through collaboration and mentorship in the arts. She is the co-founder and co-chair of the Yellowstone County Area Human Trafficking Task Force, serves as both a volunteer Peer Coordinator and Advocate for CASA of Yellowstone County, and in 2013, founded OPERATION: Billings Child, a holiday gift program for homeless children and youth enrolled in Billings School District 2.

Penny is a filmmaker and nature photographer. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Film, a Master's degree in Business Administration, and enjoyed law school. Penny grew up in Billings, MT and, in 2017, she was elected to a four-year term on Billings City Council.



## **KIM MCKEEHAN, MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELOR**

Kim is a tribal council member of the Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians of Montana. She works as a mental health counselor at a major hospital and is currently working on a children's book about the tribe's history.