

Women of Distinction nominees announced

THE STARPHOENIX MAY 3, 2011 BE THE FIRST TO POST A COMMENT



Betty-Ann Heggie

Photograph by: Sp Gord Waldner, The StarPhoenix

Here are your 2011 YWCA Women of Achievement Nominees. The 30th annual gala takes place Thursday, May 26 at TCU Place. Champagne Reception 5:30 p.m., dinner at 6 p.m. Last year, more than 600 people attended and over \$87,000.00 was raised. Tickets cost \$100 each or \$800 for a table of eight tickets. Purchase by calling Michelle at 244-7034, ext 122. More information: email wodad@ywcaskatoon.com.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

Betty-Ann Heggie

A trailblazing woman whose work paved the way for countless others in the corporate world, Betty-Ann Heggie is one of Canada's most influential and prominent promoters of equality for women in various social spheres. In business circles, Heggie is most well-known for her 26-year career with PotashCorp, during which she became the company's first female senior vice-president. She climbed the corporate ladder during a time when women were routinely excluded from consideration for leadership positions, and was instrumental in helping PotashCorp establish itself as the world's largest fertilizer enterprise. Heggie achieved numerous other "firsts" in her career as well, including being the first female sales rep for Labatt Brewery and the first woman to become a member on the Canadian Wheat Board. After retiring from PotashCorp in 2007, Heggie took an increasingly active role in the community, immediately turning her attention, time and personal financial resources to numerous initiatives in Saskatoon. She founded the Womentorship Program at the U of S Edwards School of Business, and takes an active role in mentoring dozens of aspiring female business women. She is a highly sought-after speaker, and directs proceeds from these engagements towards numerous programs designed to help women succeed in their careers. Not surprisingly, Heggie has received numerous awards for her lifetime achievements. In 2009 she won the Women Helping Women honour at the Stevie Awards in New York City, she received the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal in 2003, and, in 2006, Heggie was named one of Canada's Top 100 Most Powerful Women and was inducted into the Hall of Fame by the Women's Executive Network.

YOUTH

Jackie Cook

The work of one of this province's most energetic and creative young leaders, Jackie Cook, is already influencing positive change throughout the world. Known for her bright mind and tireless work ethic, Jackie has represented Canada at various governmental conferences, including the G8, G20 and APEC Summit. At the University of Saskatchewan, Cook is actively involved in several programs to help engage students in economic development initiatives. She co-owns a new social media company called TVZ Media that showcases the vibrancy of life in the city. She is also a board member for Care & Share Saskatoon, which creates and promotes programs for less fortunate children.

Brea Lowenberger

A young woman constantly brimming with optimism, empathy and passion for learning, Brea Lowenberger is an avid volunteer and natural leader whose work at the U of S has truly transformed the student experience. A former vice-president academic with the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union (USSU), Lowenberger is currently Coordinator of the Learning Communities program at the U of S. In this role, she has helped lead a dramatic expansion of Learning Communities on campus, a widely-respected program that helps first-year U of S students make a more successful and enjoyable transition to university life. This fall, Lowenberger will be entering law school, and hopes to use this aspect of her education to lobby for enhancements to various health, learning and social systems.

Ainsley Robertson

A born leader, Ainsley Robertson exudes passion for the community and, in particular, entrepreneurship. The co-founder and executive director of The Princess Shop, Robertson's non-profit organization creates enhanced graduation experiences and post-grad mentorship for female youth in the community. She also works with Junior Achievement as Director of High School Programs for Northern Saskatchewan. A highly sought-after speaker at leadership events and conferences, Robertson is perhaps most widely known for running in the 2010 Saskatoon municipal byelection. Although she narrowly missed becoming the city's youngest councillor on record, Robertson said she will continue to be active in making Saskatoon a great place.

Angel Shingoose

Courageous and determined to succeed, Angel Shingoose continually rises above the daily challenges of her life and strives to make life better for not only herself and young son, but the many other student-parents for whom she is a mentor. A student at Nutana Collegiate, Shingoose excels academically, has helped coordinate the CHEP Good Food Boxes in the school, and consistently contributes to various programs, including the Jacoby Centre (student-parent support centre). She says she finds gratification in helping other young women realize their full potential. Nominators say her inner strength and determination to ensure a high quality of life for her son constantly inspire and make her a respected role model amongst her peers.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Angela Bowen

After many years as a registered nurse, educator, and health care administrator, Angela Bowen had clinical questions to which she wanted to know the answers, and so she began her PhD at 47 years old. Eight years later, Bowen has firmly established herself as a leading researcher in the field of maternal mental health. Currently an Associate Professor within the College of Nursing at the U of S, she has received numerous prestigious and lucrative awards to study maternal mental health. Bowen's greatest supporters are among the 20 percent of women who experience mental health problems during pregnancy and postpartum. They know first-hand the importance of her research in the real world. Bowen's research is revolutionizing the future health of our province.

Monique Dubé

A Canada Research Chair at the U of S, Monique Dubé is a leader in water health assessment and cumulative effects. Her THREATS approach for Saskatchewan and Canada is unique in the world, focusing on improving access to water health information. Dubé serves on advisory panels for UN agencies, is an expert on oil sands monitoring, has received various peer/student-nominated awards, and won a National NSERC Synergy Award for working with industry. She is known as "a consensus builder, a motivator and a leader," works with many First Nations communities, and tirelessly lives her motto, "Science for Service." Dubé is an accomplished musician and multi-sport endurance athlete, a devoted wife and mother, and is committed to advocating for a level playing field for women in science.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Marion Ghiglione

The Director of Handy Group of Companies, Marion Ghiglione is an entrepreneur who believes that leaders have an obligation to purposefully encourage and mentor others in the community. Her focus on developing others' skills and leadership capacities has established her reputation as a woman who commands respect. Handy's employee assistance program, openness to job sharing, offer of paid continual learning, and its encouragement of community volunteer work, are all indications of Ghiglione's commitment to family, growth and leadership. She lives by the concept of "learn, earn, return," and claims to be in the "return" phase of her career, as she is becoming increasingly involved in various community-service projects.

Evelyn Novak

Evelyn Novak is a talented and committed leader. When she took on the role of inaugural Director at the newly formed Prairie Spirit School Division in 2006, her job was immense-to build one cohesive, effective school division following the merger of three divisions. Novak rose to the challenge and excelled due to her collaborative nature and empowerment of others. She demonstrated courage to take risks and commitment to unlocking the vast potential of others. Her ability to provide leadership that shares responsibility with others and targets their beliefs and values, have combined to build a school division that is well-positioned to thrive.

Ijeoma Udemgba

Ijeoma Udemgba is the Executive Director of International Women of Saskatchewan (IWS), and holds a powerful belief in the need for specialized services for immigrant and refugee women and families. Udemgba's profound passion for her work has helped build a strong team who contribute daily to the socio-cultural fabric of this community. She is dedicated, thorough and committed, and leads by example -- not only creating and securing funding for programs, but also maintaining direct involvement in program delivery. Under her leadership, IWS has thrived, and its programs have become increasingly diversified. A devoted mother and wife, Udemgba is a visionary woman whose dedication to strong families begins at home and reaches out to inspire those around her.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Jeannette Ambrose

Jeannette Ambrose is a caring and compassionate woman who has impacted countless lives in our community through her expertise with grief and trauma therapy and suicide intervention. As a mother with young children, Ambrose discovered her passion for trauma working with trauma and loss at the Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Centre. She went on to pursue a Master's degree in psychology and, after working for the Saskatoon Health Region for almost 20 years, felt a need to sacrifice job security and establish a new business that would help her to more effectively reach those in need. The resulting business-Connections Counselling, Training and Consulting-was founded upon Ambrose's love of people and commitment to helping others heal.

Dr. Pat Blakely

Dr. Pat Blakely is one of Saskatchewan's foremost advocates for children with developmental disabilities, and her work has improved the lives of countless families facing trying circumstances. The division head of developmental pediatrics at the U of S, Blakely is described by colleagues and clients as down-to-earth, knowledgeable and one who selflessly invests herself in both patients and their families. In addition to her professional work with the Alvin Buckwold Child Development Program, she serves as a volunteer member on several provincial committees, working to improve the quality of life for disabled children. She is an associate professor at the U of S, where her expertise and compassion make her an ideal role model for the next generation of physicians.

Debbie Chodak

Debbie Chodak exudes the perfect balance of patience, enthusiasm and compassion required to succeed in care work -- a sector in which she has worked for many years. The mother of two, and breast cancer survivor, she has operated a day care, worked as a home care aide, and is currently the program supervisor at Cosmopolitan Industries. Chodak teaches various life skills to Cosmo's 400 employees, and finds it gratifying to watch these individuals become increasingly involved in society. While Debbie is an esteemed mentor to many, she says her personal role models are those she works with. They teach her that caring for others and enjoying life are more important than anything in the material world.

Debra Gudmundson

Debra Gudmundson is a registered nurse, employed by the Saskatoon Health Region for over 30 years in a variety of roles. She is currently the executive director for acute care, which includes surgical services, maternal and children's health services, critical care and emergency

departments, and is the site leader for Saskatoon City Hospital. Gudmundson's passion has always been advocating for patients and their

families, wanting them directly involved in decisions accompanying their care. Her work in this regard has led to transformational changes in the delivery of health care. Where others see challenges, Gudmundson sees opportunities. Her strong leadership style-based on integrity, perseverance, vision and willingness to confront difficult issues with compassion-has made her a leader in her field.

Jan Henrikson

Jan Henrikson has a passion for people, community and empowering individuals to reach their full potential. Through the practice of yoga, she has found a way to merge these passions. The former lay chaplain for the Unitarian Congregation of Saskatoon has become a rising star in the local yoga world. She owns Joos Yoga, a multi-faceted yoga, teaching and wellness hub. This business focuses on exercise and good health, combined with a practice of compassion and consciousness for community and earth. Jan regularly organizes fundraising events, volunteers in the community and has played a key role in the growth and expansion of the Saskatoon yoga community over the past eight years.

Fran Hey

Fran Hey has been working in the field of recreation therapy for 35 years. She is highly respected within this area, but what makes her exceptional and worthy of this nomination is her incredible capacity to improve the lives of not only Parkridge Centre residents, but also their families and others around her. Hey believes in celebrating small achievements, knowing people as individuals and genuinely caring about their interests. She is consistently positive and motivated, focusing on innovative means to improve quality of life and ensuring that connections with the community are retained for the residents. With a proven record of relentless work and compassion towards others, Hey continues to believe in the importance of therapeutic recreation and teamwork within a continuing care setting.

Peggy MacLeod

Peggy MacLeod is a wife, mother, registered nurse and nurse educator who is passionate about promoting healthy communities. She believes that a robust, vibrant community is one in which people of all ages are actively engaged. She has spent decades working to ensure that seniors remain involved in the community as long as possible. MacLeod has collaborated in creating programs for isolated seniors; worked with pro bono law students who evaluated Saskatchewan legislation for advocacy purposes and interpreted legislation for use in presentations to the elderly; and led an educational initiative with personal care homes. She has served on numerous boards and committees. In essence, MacLeod lives her belief that each individual can make valuable contributions to the community -- given the opportunity.

Louise Oelke

Louise Oelke is a tireless advocate of a statement she once heard from an elder: "As long as there is breath in a person, there is hope." Her

extensive history of service in our community has focused on enabling healthier lifestyles, established a new standard for social programs, and included work toward improved client and family care and Aboriginal health programs in the Saskatoon Health Region. Oelke's work in Saskatoon's inner city has included income/sobriety-based housing developments, reuniting broken families, creating a safe haven for women and establishing a long-term male recovery/addictions program. In her role as the executive director of CUMFI shelters (Central Urban Métis Federation Incorporated), Louise is committed to reducing inter-generational dysfunction on youth, and building bridges between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Diane Ehrhardt

Diane Ehrhardt's dream to own her own business became a reality in 2009, and now, two years later, Serenity Apparel continues to grow by leaps and bounds. Specializing in affordable yoga and fitness clothing, Ehrhardt has attracted a dedicated clientele through her philosophy that business should be about developing relationships and helping clients feel good about themselves. Her outgoing personality, warm smile and constant optimism create this atmosphere. Ehrhardt is also a strong advocate for giving back to the community however possible and -- even while building her business -- she has provided many donations and corporate sponsorships for various events.

Jen Faith

Having left the security of the corporate world to pursue her dreams as an entrepreneur, Jen Faith's perseverance and resulting business, buffalo bean baby gear, have made a shining example of success in small town Saskatchewan. Faith first created what is now known as the bean pod baby sling to meet a need she felt was lacking in the local market. Following the success of this product, her company has grown substantially and now sells numerous Saskatchewan-made items at more than 70 stores across Canada. An active volunteer in her rural community of Borden, Faith helped to kick-start female exercise activities and was instrumental in leading fundraising activities for a new park.

Marie Jensen

The owner of Pink Tree The Fitting Shop, Marie Jensen had a vision 20 years ago that has not only evolved into a successful business, but also provides compassionate support for her clients. Pink Tree is a one-stop shop, specializing in clothing and products for people whose lives have been touched by cancer and other health concerns -- from prosthesis and wigs, to compression stockings, bras for every woman and Sun Smart clothing. The first shop of its kind in Canada, Pink Tree opened during a time when most people were not talking openly about many types of cancer, particularly breast cancer. However, the growth and success of Pink Tree speaks to Jensen's acute business sense and her ability to connect with clients on a highly personal level.

Emma Love

Having started her photography business in 2007, Emma Love has been allowed to achieve success in a highly competitive market due to her passion for people and their life's special events. Clients say that Emma Love Photography embodies the honesty, respect and passion of its namesake, and that Love's intensely creative and positive outlook on life is reflected in her work. With an educational background in the Fine Arts, Love started her photography business, allowing her husband to return to school following the birth of their daughter. In addition to wedding and portrait photography, Love also started pout boudoir weekends, where she teams with a local hair and makeup artist to give women a day filled with pampering and empowerment.

Tracey Muzzolini

Widely regarded as Saskatoon's most accomplished artisan baker, Tracey Muzzolini has a passion for her profession that has helped establish both Christie's Mayfair Bakery and Il Secondo as two of the finest bakeries in the city. Originally opened in 1932, Christie's Bakery was purchased by Muzzolini's parents in 1965 and is now operated by Tracey and her brother Blair. The profound popularity of Christie's prompted the Muzzolinis to recently open Il Secondo on Broadway, which has been filled to near capacity since day one. Never one to rely on past success, Muzzolini constantly experiments with new recipes and techniques. She has also competed for Canada at the various baking competitions around the world, having won several awards in the process.

Susanne Neufeld

Twelve years ago, Susanne Neufeld set up a modest Internet home-based business so that she could stay at home to raise her young children. Today, that website has grown into Saskatchewan's most popular destination for private home sales. The site, saskhouses.com, has transformed the real estate market by helping make private sales straightforward and convenient. Neufeld is always striving to keep the website current and cutting edge, and saskhouses.com is continually expanding into new markets throughout the province. Her focus on customer service, marketing and innovation has made her website a household name in many communities, and has helped save

Saskatchewan homeowners millions of dollars by selling their homes privately.

EDUCATION

Allison Cameron

A self-described fitness advocate and lifelong learner, Allison Cameron has successfully combined these passions to benefit countless students and gain national acclaim. As a new special education teacher at City Park Collegiate, Cameron arrived with an immediate vision and determination to make a difference. She soon launched an initiative that links cardiovascular exercise and strength training with academics, called Movement Matters, and it produced immediate results. Her students started their first class with a 20-minute exercise segment, and their academic and behaviour improvements were so impressive that Movement Matters was extended to the entire school.

Cameron's program has since gained national media attention and has inspired a dedicated following in various regions throughout Canada, the U.S., and Mexico.

Kathy Jo Simmie

Communication is a foundation of successful living, for young and old alike, and Kathy Jo Simmie has dedicated her career to creating high-quality speech and language consultation. For more than 30 years -- 20 of those in her own private practice -- Simmie has been working with individuals who have communication disorders ranging from stuttering to autism. She says seeing her former clients succeed at university, technical school, employment and in their communities gives her the greatest satisfaction. Simmie is bold, willing to take risks and doesn't believe in taking no for an answer. This has ensured that not only individuals, but also their families and communities, are equipped with the necessary tools for broad-based communication success.

Jodi Simpson

Jodi Simpson has dedicated her life to fostering the emotional, intellectual and spiritual growth of individuals with special needs. A teacher at Bishop James Mahoney High School, Simpson is a compassionate teacher who believes that all students can achieve success. She recognizes that success is defined on an individual basis. She dedicates hundreds of hours coaching athletic teams, and leads a group that focuses on building a strong social community in the school. For the past 11 years, Simpson has also been involved in the PAAL (Physical Activity for Active Living) and University School of Dance at the U of S, where she instructs and coordinates programs for individuals with physical and cognitive disabilities.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

Saba Andu

Forced to flee her war-torn homeland, Saba Andu has since assumed the role of activist, counsellor and mentor for countless refugees since arriving in Saskatoon 24 years ago. Andu left her family and home country of Eritrea in 1987 -- walking by night and hiding by day over three days until reaching Sudan. Eight years later, she was reunited with her two sisters in Saskatoon, and began working for the Open Door Society. Through her work there, she has been a strong advocate for families with low income, refugee and immigrant rights, and the physical and emotional abuse of women and children. She also runs a personal care home, and says the five special needs adults she looks after are her daily inspiration.

Vanessa Charles

An outspoken champion for those living on low incomes, Vanessa Charles harbours a compassion that comes from experience and is based on the belief that everyone deserves a second chance. Twelve years ago, she found herself suddenly unable to work and forced from a middle-class life to one where she relied on social assistance. This experience inspired her to begin fighting for those whose voices are often marginalized by poverty. She is currently a member of the Saskatoon Anti-Poverty Coalition, CHEP, Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Strategy Partnership, and has volunteered with countless other organizations. In coming years, Vanessa Charles says she hopes to advocate

for greater awareness around the importance of senior housing options that uphold independence, dignity, privacy and choice.

Namarta Kochar

A highly active volunteer and role model in the business community, Namarta Kochar has worked to strengthen various spheres throughout the community. In her business life, Kochar works as the director of major projects with Refresh, an emerging business strategy and communications firm. Outside of work, she actively volunteers for a dizzying array of programs related to both health care and culture throughout the province, including the Arthritis Society, Alzheimer's Society, Folkfest and the Hindu Temple, to name but a few. One nominator described Kochar as a young woman who continually inspires through -- not just her actions -- but her positive and

giving attitude. Environmental advocacy is becoming increasingly important to her as well -- a sentiment proven by her current seat on the City's Saskatoon Environmental Advisory Committee (SEAC).

Shelly Loeffler

When Saskatoon Jazz Society lost its home in 2008, there were significant concerns about its future in the city. However, under Shelly Loeffler's leadership, a new state-of-the-art facility was secured a year later and the Jazz Society has since thrived, with membership burgeoning to more than 600 individuals. Many believe that the organization would have never rebounded without Loeffler's tireless efforts. She has served as president for the past four years. Loeffler has taught in the city for more than 30 years and established two unique programs, Ecoquest and Collective Voice, which teach Grade 8 and 9 students about everything from ecology and culture to communication and critical thinking. She is also an active volunteer, regularly contributing to the Saskatoon Learning Disabilities Council and Friendship Inn.

Lynn Schaan

The Family Network Coordinator with the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living, Lynn Schann has helped countless families through her advocacy work and relentlessly positive attitude in often challenging life circumstances. Described as upbeat, ambitious and always supportive, Schann organizes numerous conferences that help families with special needs children get the support and services they require. She even hosts an annual retreat at her cottage -- complete with qualified child care -- that provides a relaxing getaway for many families who could never go on vacation otherwise. Having raised an autistic son herself, Schann's demonstrates that her advocacy for intellectually-challenged children is not just her job, it is her passion and one that she exudes every day.

Christine Smillie

Christine Smillie grew up in a family committed to social justice. She has the ability to recognize issues which improve conditions for people in need of help. In 1997, Smillie joined a group of people from different Lutheran and United Church congregations in Saskatoon to form NEST Saskatoon, a refugee settlement group. She is a past president and current board member of the Hope Cancer Help Centre. As well, Smillie is an active member of Iskwewuk-E-Wichiwitochik (Women Walking Together), a group of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women who work together to raise awareness of missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Saskatchewan and across Canada.

ATHLETICS

Michelle Dezell

The Manager of Athlete Services for Sask Sport, Michelle Dezell lives her belief that sport can break down barriers and forge lifelong friendships. Her integrity, work ethic and respectful leadership are perpetually evident, whether she is working with Olympic athletes or helping engage youth in community athletic programs. In addition to her many contributions professionally, Dezell is an active volunteer with initiatives that provide underprivileged children athletic opportunities. Since joining Sask Sport in 1993 as a student intern, Dezell has grown into a mentor -- recognized by co-workers, athletes and friends throughout the country. Motivated by her belief in everyone's right to play, she continually levels the playing field and ensures access to sport activities for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Amanda Grainger

An accomplished hockey player and respected leader - both on and off the ice - Amanda Grainger has the determination to succeed in multiple areas and inspires those around her. Most recently, she played four years with the AAA Battlefords Sharks, winning both Team MVP and Leadership Award honours this past season. Due to her well-rounded academic and athletic skills, Grainger was offered a roster spot with the women's division I hockey team at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, and will be moving there this August. Although she maintains a highly active schedule, Grainger believes in giving back to the community. She regularly volunteers at the Food Bank, participates in the Relay for Life and has led a charity walk benefiting the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

ARTS, CULTURE AND/OR HERITAGE

Claudine Audette-Rozon

A tireless champion of both the arts and Francophone communities, Claudine Audette-Rozon is one of this province's most talented and inspiring visual artists. Despite living with Parkinson's disease since 1991, she has learned to consistently draw upon the positive energy in her life. The resulting art, and community-oriented work, has created a living legacy. Audette-Rozon's art is constantly evolving and has been displayed in exhibitions around the world. She has served as a guest artist on several Armed Forces exercises, and has also focused her work on various other subjects including clowns and landscapes. Audette-Rozon is a respected staple in the local Francophone community, having served as president of various cultural organizations.

Madeleine Blais-Dahlem

A professional playwright, author and former French immersion teacher, Madeleine Blais-Dahlem has been described as an artist, cultural activist, and perhaps most aptly, a "real fireball." While working as a teacher, Blais-Dahlem began playwriting to reflect her students' experiences. This set in motion a playwriting passion that has lasted 20 years. Blais-Dahlem is widely respected for her significant body of work, which is bilingual. She occupies a unique niche in Canadian theatre. She is committed to using the arts to develop and preserve cultural heritage in a minority setting, and has been the driving force behind La Troupe du Jour's new Production Centre facility. Now open, this facility is quickly becoming an artistic hub for youth, independent theatre companies and local artists.

Juliette Perrey-Perez A.R.A.D.R.T.C.

A relative latecomer to the art of ballet, Juliette Perrey-Perez fell in love with the dance at the age of 13 and proceeded to pursue its study with tremendous dedication. Her longstanding passion for ballet has led her to a rewarding career as a dancer, teacher and educator in theatre for 51 years. Perrey-Perez has helped establish Saskatchewan as an internationally relevant ballet locale, and led many students to a deep appreciation for the art form. For many, her dance centre becomes a second home where they learn life skills such as self-discipline, hard work and commitment. Her desire to share her love of dance has led her to teach not only in Saskatoon, but also throughout the province and internationally in the USA and Europe.

Leona Theis

If a writer is patient and lucky, she might discover an insight worth sharing, or a new take on a classic dilemma, or even just a turn of phrase

that will delight. These are the reasons Leona Theis is passionate about writing. Theis believes each community needs its own stories to read and to share with the world; so she writes, and, in the process, encourages other local artists. Theis enriches the cultural and creative communities, and is a busy volunteer within both the arts and non-arts sectors. A member of various boards, committees and social groups, Theis is a well-respected voice and leader, driven by a love of people and the pursuit of community partnerships that allow the arts to thrive.

Lisa Wilson

A tireless promoter of Métis heritage and culture, Lisa Wilson has been particularly integral to expanding opportunities available to Aboriginal writers throughout the province. For the past 13 years, Wilson has worked at the Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI), where she is currently a Director. Her work at GDI, as well as her volunteer efforts with the Saskatchewan Writers Guild and Aboriginal Writers' Festival, have helped significantly augment the status of Aboriginal writers throughout the province. Last year, she led a membership drive for the SWG, which resulted in the recruitment of 135 new members in a six-month period, 45 of whom were Aboriginal. In the near future, Wilson plans to help establish an Aboriginal writers' circle that advocates for, and supports, both new and aspiring authors.