

Interior Salish MMIWG2S Staff

K'althwa7al'ap nsnek'wnuk'wa7 (Hello Friends and Relatives)

My English name is Lenora Lampreau (nee Starr/Benko/Billy) – My úcwalmicw name is Cícelnak, I am from Xaxli'p in St'át'imc territory.

In 2017 St'át'imc held our Naskan Úxwal' (I am coming home) ceremony. Naskan Úxwal' was a time when St'át'imc went to K.I.R.S. to bring our spirits home. During this event, I was gifted a white eagle feather from Brad Firth (Cariboo Legs), he stated it had travelled across Canada to raise awareness for MMIWG2S and to unify the people. I put the feather away for a year to reflect and pray to understand why I had been given this responsibility and where to take the feather next.

I shared the story of the white feather with my partner, Arnie Lampreau (Nlaka'pamux). He and Ernie Michell (Nlaka'pamux) came up with the idea and design a smaller staff as well as a larger sister staff. They were ceremonied over when handed to me in 2019. Since that time my sister, Laura Grizzlypaws has assisted me with the decoration of the staff. From that moment, it was deemed a woman's staff. I have been given the responsibility to further create and care for this staff representing our MMIWG2S. Again, I found myself in prayer and ceremony looking for direction for this staff's purpose.

Through the Nation based work I was doing in St'át'imc I had been researching our roles as Indigenous women in our communities. This led me to look back at our relationships, at Nation level, to understand how we worked and lived in cooperation with communities around us. We truly relied on each other for survival. Our relationships were complex and had developed since time immemorial. We developed strong alliances and understandings. Our roles and relationships to each other were clear. Our roles as women were very different than how society defines it now. We need to get back to our traditional ways of recognizing, respecting and uplifting our women, thereby enhancing their purpose and safety overall.

Given the Nation level scope of our women's role and their need for safety, this staff has grown to be representative of and for Interior Salish tribes. The collaboration of our Nations will be reflected visually on the staff by the collective contributions of the feathers. **Every feather on the staff has been given by community members who want their past loved ones represented on the staff.**

My hope is that the staff contributes to the revitalization of our traditional ways of being and existing together in harmony and unity...encouraging our women to be well and reclaim the respected role they are entitled to. This also calls upon our men to fulfill their role to provide and protect.

I will be in attendance at the Tk'emlups te Secwepemc Red Dress Event on May 5, 2024, with the Interior Salish MMIWG2S Staff. **If anyone wishes to add a feather to the staff(s) to represent their loved ones that fit into the unfortunate category of MMIWG I will be open to accepting feathers.**

Speak to your family members and plan who will present a feather for your lost loved one. No need to bead the feathers, we will look after the feathers and add them to the staff(s).

Kukwstum'úlhkacw,
Lenora Lampreau