



Native Women's Association of Canada

Press Release—For Immediate Release

NWAC mourns the death of former President Bertha Allen

Ottawa, ON (May 12, 2010) – The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is saddened by the loss of Bertha Allen a powerful leader for Aboriginal women's rights. A founding member of the Native Women's Association of North West Territories, Ms. Allen was laid to rest after succumbing to a lengthy battle with cancer at the age of 76.

A Gwich'in women's leader who was born in Old Crow, Yukon, Ms. Allen lived most of her life in the Mackenzie Delta area. She was a staunch believer in advancing social change on behalf of Aboriginal and Northern women; and as a result devoted her life toward helping to achieve this equality on a number of fronts. Her involvement dates back to the 1970's when she helped to found the Native Women's Association of the Northwest Territories, eventually becoming the organization's first President. Later on, Ms. Allen conducted work on the issue of gender equality for Aboriginal women by acting nationally as the President of the Native Women's Association of Canada.

“Bertha Allen spent her lifetime championing the rights of Aboriginal and Northern women in Canada. Her strength of character and commitment to achieve equality for Aboriginal women was an inspiration. Her role as an activist and leader also led to the creation of numerous training centers for Native women in Yellowknife and Inuvik. I am deeply saddened to hear of her passing, and wish to extend my condolences to her family and friends. On behalf of the Native Women's Association of Canada, I can say with a heavy heart that we will all mourn the loss of such an inspiring, and dedicated woman,” says current NWAC President Jeannette Corbiere Lavell.

Her involvement in pursuit of equality was expansive. In addition to her leadership roles within NWAC, Ms. Allen also worked on the NWT Constitutional Committee, served on the National Aboriginal Advisory Committee to the RCMP Commissioner, the NWT Judicial Appointments Committee, and the Multicultural Advisory Committee to the RCMP.

In 2005, she was recognized for her leadership and received the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation's Lifetime Achievement Award. This recognition continued on in 2007, when she was named to the Order of Canada. Last year, she was honoured with the Northern Medal by Governor General Michaëlle Jean for her role in supporting equality for Aboriginal and Northern women.

Ms. Allen's contributions to the Native Women's Association of Canada were many and the organization wishes to remember her powerful wisdom and strength of spirit.

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