



ILDI staff from left to right: Alicia Hunt, Summer Student; Miranda Smoke, Manager Special Projects and Finance; Sandra Ducharme, Project Coordinator; Rosa Walker, President and CEO; Amber Sumner, Project Coordinator; Melanie Dean, Director Executive Training; Mackenzie Oatway, Project Assistant.

Building a Legacy of Indigenous Leadership

The Indigenous Leadership Development Institute Inc. (ILDI), a non-profit organization located in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, has been building the leadership capacities of First Nation, Metis and Inuit Peoples for more than 20 years. Since its inception in 2000, ILDI has delivered quality training for self-governance, supporting Indigenous excellence, creating strategic plans, providing high-level negotiation skills and bridging cultural awareness training to corporations across Canada and beyond.

“We have seen Indigenous People taking more control over their own governance, over their own communities,” said Rosa Walker, president and chief executive officer of ILDI. “Communities need more than a ‘drop-in approach’ to delivering programs and services, where someone just flies in to deliver them then flies out without leaving anything—no capacity behind. We as Indigenous People know the needs of our communities. We use contemporary leadership skills and traditional ways to meet [our] unique needs.”

ILDI has worked with Indigenous communities to support the evolution to self-governance, working to help communities build their capacities through leadership development, training and skill building, and helping to bring important economic development to communities.

ILDI operates under the principles of “Indigenous Leadership for Tomorrow, Today”. As an all-Indigenous organization—including its ownership, board and staff, who all happen to be women—it works with over fifty Indigenous facilitators who

bring their knowledge and expertise to centres across Canada.

“It’s personal,” added Walker, referring to the work that ILDI does. “We have a personal stake in our people doing well. We have community knowledge; we live our roots, our culture, our teachings.”

This deeply personal approach is infused into everything the organization does, and it begins with programs that invest in Indigenous youth and a vision for their success. *Empowering Indigenous Youth in Governance and Leadership* (EIYGL) provides mentorship and meaningful skill development through ILDI’s Executive Training, giving Indigenous youth opportunities to facilitate and learn as well as to lead training, all under the guidance of ILDI and its senior facilitators.

This legacy program builds effective leaders using traditional community practices and learnings from Elders as well as contemporary leaders, noted Walker.

The facilitators that ILDI works with are Indigenous and have decades of experience working directly in the areas of human resources, law, administration and project management—all areas that are needed for capacity building, self-governance, professional development and nation building. “Our facilitators want to give back to their communities, to contribute to the success of our people, to share best practices, lessons learned, knowledge and experience that they have acquired throughout their careers,” said Walker.

ILDI training offers many course titles, such as Governance Requisites for Leaders, Strategic Planning, Mediation, Negotiation, Conflict Resolution, Board Training, How Government Works and the Online E-Learning Canadian Indigenous Culture Training: Truth and Reconciliation Edition.

After its first decade of operation, ILDI noticed that something was missing: a broader, global approach to Indigenous community development. In 2010, they partnered with the World Business Forum (WBF) in New York City and launched

the first-ever World Indigenous Business Forum (WIBF). Since then, WIBF has held events in the USA, Canada, Australia, Namibia, Guatemala, Santiago de Chile and New Zealand. The forum is developed by Indigenous Peoples leading Indigenous organizations, staff and partners, but open to Indigenous and non-Indigenous entrepreneurs, companies and individuals. The event has attracted close to a thousand Indigenous business people every year since 2010.

With the overwhelming success of the WIBF and the business partnerships

engagement, mentorship and workshops—all customized to meet the needs of communities, from education and conflict resolution to governance, accountability and intergovernmental relations.

“We are doing everything we can to deliver programs online, to provide advancement and leadership tools, and to do it in a cost efficient manner to help communities stretch their training dollars,” said Walker.

“In spite of challenges, including underfunding, Indigenous communities have continued to grow and govern themselves.

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*- ILDI President and CEO,
Rosa Walker*



formed at the event, the World Indigenous Business Network (WIBN) protocol was signed by international Indigenous leaders in Guatemala, Chile, Canada, USA, Namibia, Australia and New Zealand. This created an online community that helps to connect, inspire and mobilize organizations and entrepreneurs for the sustainable development of Indigenous businesses, providing opportunities to widen markets, skip intermediaries and build Indigenous prosperity through economic growth.

The current global pandemic is the biggest challenge ILDI has encountered in its 20-year history as a leader in training and skill development, noted Walker. To meet the challenges of this COVID-19 world, ILDI has changed the way it is meeting community needs by continuing to develop online programming, training,

We’ve worked across Canada with First Nations, Inuit and Métis People. It’s growing and it’s remarkable to see.” ❖

The ILDI Board of Directors is made up of volunteers; its members embody decades of leadership and commitment as chiefs, elected officials, band councillors, ministers, board chairs, CEOs, senior advisors and lawyers. The current ILDI Board includes Andrew Carrier, Debbie Burka, Irene Linklater, Ivan Makil, Milton Tootoosis and Chief Dennis Meeches. ILDI acknowledges the contributions of past Board Members Ted Fontaine, Dan Highway, Alan Luby, and former staff members Georgina Liberty, Barb Moran and Barb Hambleton.

For more information on ILDI, visit ildii.ca.