

Final Report of the UWSA President

2020-2021

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FINAL EXECUTIVE REPORTS AND FAREWELLS

PRESIDENT – SHAWNA PÉLOQUIN

The UWSA organization is a student union whose first mandate is to represent the best interest of its members; it further does so through the delivery of an intersectionality of services that support our student's university journey. Over the past year, the UWSA has faced incredible challenges that has not only interfered with its ability to properly service students but that has also revealed a structural vulnerability to create harms to students. The experience and testimonies of previous executives have revealed a harmful gap in the UWSA ability to uphold its values within and outside of its governance structure, the reality of a global pandemic has stressed the importance of a sustainable, efficient, responsible and accountable governance structure. The workload carried by the UWSA 2020-2021 Board of Directors to maintain the operations and business of the student union while undergoing major organizational change to transition services online; while also facing allegations of racism and discrimination and with the absences of an executive authority is extraordinary. The ability of our directors to roll their sleeves up and to dedicate crucial attention to the operation of the UWSA at its most needed moment was crucial for our student community and union wellness.

I was elected UWSA President at the 2020 UWSA By-Election, an unusual event that occurred last in 2004. It is important to me to note that others came before me and that their leadership did have an impact on how I chose to pursue mine in this role.

Under the service of my leadership as UWSA President and main ambassador of the organization, I used our internal and external challenges as an opportunity for the UWSA as whole to shift how leadership and kindness can be express in our community and how we can engage with the union that advocates, services and supports students learning experience and opportunities at the University of Winnipeg. A lot of my work was behind the scene looking at systemic issues and gaps and addressing concerns with the university, building on creative collaboration between the University and the UWSA and creating space for more voices to be included.

At the beginning of my contract on November 4th, 2020 I started a two weeks training in order to be able to carry my position duty as soon as possible so that we could work on catching up with executive duties that where left unaddressed. My first step as President was to create more space for student leaders to affirm their potential and to bring more capacity to the board and the union by leading the appointing process for vacant directorships and UWSA senator seats. I've further held myself accountable to the new energy I was bringing to the team mid-term, and to nurture at every layer possible kindness, engagement and to honor the consortium of voices on the board and within our team. By working together, acknowledging our expectations and intents and collaborating with the university's administration, faculty, and staff has allowed us at the UWSA to bring forth the compassionate grading options for the fall

semester despite working with a tight timeline. It has further allowed us to build direct communication with the UWinnipeg Foundation and to bring students concerns and input to a space they had been excluded from for far too long in the past. We've further created and have given life to the first UWSA Senator Caucus and took the lead in addressing and challenging the systemic racism and colonial structure of our processes. We've also created more opportunity for students to engage and provide feedback on structure and process where they couldn't provide feedback in the past so that we can keep on growing in accordance with the diversity of our students and of their communities of support.

As a Two-Spirit Indigenous Woman I have been both honored and oppressed by the boundary of my role as the CEO of a non-profit and I am humbled, honored and amazed by the strength, resilience, and leadership I have encountered in our university community through my work with our student union. The UWSA 2020-2021 Board of Directors have been critical, responsible and dedicated and have shown me that leadership does not need authority to be powerful, that it does not need a position to be inspiring and that it is a space of courage, vulnerability and uncomfortable engagements. There will always be more to do, more to challenge and more to look forward to and I am grateful for the journey we've had together this year, for the team I joined mid-term and for the kindness, dedication and strength of our students leaders and of our UWinnipeg student community at-large in the uncertainty of a global pandemic. My focus in all that I do is to work for and toward a future where everyone has the freedom to be happy and the ability to grow into their authentic selves, and I am excited to see where the union will be lead next as we move forward into a changed world.

Kinanaskomitinawaw, Megwetch and Thank you to The UWSA Team for the learning, the hard work, the love and the journey.