



THE UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG

MEDIA ADVISORY

**November 15, 2006
For Immediate Release**

Aboriginal Governance Program & UWSA Honour Aboriginal Women, Heed Their Voices

WINNIPEG—The voices of Aboriginal women in North America are rarely heard outside of the home and community. Community ‘experts’ are usually men. Often, media focus is placed on the sensational and usually negative stories about Aboriginal people, which marginalizes and minimizes Aboriginal women’s voices.

The University of Winnipeg Aboriginal Governance Program Harry Daniels Distinguished Lecture Series and The University of Winnipeg Students’ Association (UWSA) are hosting an evening of celebration November 21, 2006 in honour of the tremendous work accomplished by Aboriginal women in urban and rural communities, in the home and in the school. Four outstanding women have been selected as role models to be honoured at this event: a Native American rights advocate; a long-time local advocate and ambassador of the Aboriginal community; and, a mother of four and current UWinnipeg student who is an inspiration. The fourth honoree is to be confirmed.

**Evening Honouring Aboriginal Women:
Winona LaDuke, Josie Hill and Claudette Michell
Tuesday, November 21, 2006
Bulman Centre, University of Winnipeg, 515 Portage Avenue**

**6:30 p.m. – Gathering
6:55 p.m. – Panel Discussion
8:25 p.m. – Presentation Ceremony to Honorees
9:30 p.m. – Closing**

The panel discussion will feature each honoree speaking about her role in home and community and her life history including her struggles and successes.

The event will highlight the barriers, challenges and triumphs faced by Aboriginal women. Organizers anticipate this one-time event may become an annual evening/weekend of activities celebrating the role that Aboriginal women play in shaping all aspects of Canadian society.

The honorees come from different national, communal, and socio-economic backgrounds and represent a diversity of perspectives.

Background Information on Honorees

Josie Hill

Hill has long been recognized as an effective advocate and ambassador for the Aboriginal community to governments, other agencies and society in general. She has worked for the betterment and well-

being of her community for over 25 years, developing many services directly related to the needs of children and families. Her greatest accomplishments have been the Native Women's Transition Centre, Andrews Street Family Centre and most recently the refocusing of services of the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre.

Since 1997, Hill has served as the Executive Director of the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre. In this time, she has led the agency on a journey of renewal moving from the perspective of a traditional client-centred approach toward a new appreciation of engaged citizens as the ultimate resource for families. This has resulted in the organization delivering service from a community service delivery model.

As a result of Hill's vision and leadership, many organizations throughout Winnipeg have embraced a community development process that has enabled local empowerment and provided a voice for families that builds capacity for self-care.

Winona LaDuke

Winona LaDuke (Anishinaabe) is an internationally renowned Native American activist and advocate for environmental, women's and children's rights. She is the founder and campaign director of the *White Earth Land Recovery Project*, a First Nations-based land acquisition, environmental advocacy, and cultural organization. She is also founder and co-chair of the Indigenous Women's Network. LaDuke serves as program director of "Honour the Earth," a Native American foundation working primarily on environmental and energy policy issues. Named by *Ms.* magazine as the 1997 Woman of the Year along with folk-rock duo the Indigo Girls, LaDuke is also a two-time US Green Party vice-presidential candidate in 1996 and 2000.

In 1988, LaDuke won the Reebok Human Rights Award, launching the White Earth Land Recovery Project with the proceeds. In 1994, *Time* magazine named her one of the "50 For the Future," the country's most promising leaders under age 40. She and the White Earth Land Recovery Project recently received the prestigious international Slow Food Award for their work with protecting wild rice and local biodiversity.

A graduate of Harvard and Antioch University, she has written extensively on Native American and environmental issues and is the author of five books including: *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* (South End Press). LaDuke is the mother of five children, and lives with her family on the White Earth Reservation in northern Minnesota.

Claudette Michell

Attaining an education has been at the forefront of Michell's mindset from an early age in life. Michell, a mother of four children ranging in age from eight months to 23, is currently in her fourth year in the Bachelor of Arts/Aboriginal Governance program at The University of Winnipeg. She also holds an honours diploma in Aboriginal Governance Administration from Red River College and a Business Administration diploma from Keewatin Community College (now University of the North) in The Pas, Manitoba.

Michell has volunteered with the Aboriginal Governance Students' Association, Circle of Life Thunderbird House, Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak and the Low Income Intermediary Project. She has been involved in setting up healing circles for people who attended residential schools and in the creation and start-up of the non-profit organization Kichaaschimaau Ogimaawiwin, Inc., (interpreted as advisor, through leading). They planned and organized a youth conference, "Governance through Traditional Methodologies" and set up a conference regarding the proposed legislation for the FNGA (BILL C-7). As well, Michell has conducted research for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Social Planning Council of Winnipeg and the Low Income Intermediary Project.

As part of an Aboriginal Governance class, Michell is now working with residents in the Lord Selkirk Park area and conducting research with the hope of establishing an Adult Learning Centre for this community. To date, she says, “I have had the opportunity through my education to learn of, work with and observe many of the barriers that Aboriginal people have been confronted with historically and are still challenged with today. My future plans include working with Aboriginal people, whether it is in the north, or in an urban setting in overcoming and facing our difficulties.”

Located in the heart of downtown, The University of Winnipeg is a compact, diverse, multicultural academic community committed to access and excellence. Home to more than 9,200 full- and part-time students, UWinnipeg has been ranked by our graduates in the Top Ten of all Canadian universities when asked about their “Entire Educational Experience” (Maclean’s Graduate Survey, June 2006). The Globe & Mail 2006 Report Card gives The University of Winnipeg an overall ‘A’ grade in the areas of quality of education, teaching quality, class sizes, faculty-student interaction, and the availability of faculty outside classroom hours. Find out why. Visit www.uwinnipeg.ca

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For more information, please contact:

Ilana Simon, Communications Officer
The University of Winnipeg
T: 204.786.9930 C: 204.782.3279 i.simon@uwinnipeg.ca

Or

Wendy Fontaine, Aboriginal Governance Program
The University of Winnipeg
T: 204.786.9305 w.fontaine@uwinnipeg.ca