

Maria Campbell, *Eagle Feather News*, March 2017

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Strong women made the greatest contributions in our history

Miswayta iskwew kisikah anooch.

My written Cree leaves something to be desired, but hello all you Eagle Feather people. I hope you all had a Happy Woman's Day celebrating your kohkoms, mama's, sisters and cousins, as well as all the amazing women in our communities and country.

On days like that I feel so blessed and fortunate, not just as an Indigenous person, but also in my personal life. If it were not for these women I am afraid to think of where we all would be and how different our lives might have been.

Recently, in doing some research, I came across an article that quoted a Jesuit missionary who, in the mid 1700s, wrote, "these women (Indigenous women) have entirely too much power and authority."

Well. thank goodness for that. because when we look at the history of Indigenous peoples since contact, it has been that power and authority that has been our strength and it was certainly not from a lack of trying to destroy it by those missionaries and the men who came to plunder our land and take our resources

I never grew up hearing that Indigenous women had power and authority, so I do thank that long ago Jesuit for recording that. I also never heard praise heaped on women,

I don't even remember anyone ever saying 'thank you to our moms or our aunties and nohkoms for all the work they did to keep family and community healthy and strong.

Our nohkoms did midwifery and looked after the dying, they picked and dried medicines to doctor their families as well as the neighbor's, who often came to them for help.

Our mom's hauled barrels of water from nearby gravel pits, sloughs and lakes to wash their clothes on a scrub board. In the winter they hauled bags of snow and melted it on the stove.

They canned hundreds of jars of vegetables from the big gardens they tended all summer and the wild berries they picked on the land.

They tanned hides for the nohkoms who were too old to do it for themselves but who could sit and sew all the beautiful beaded moccasins and jackets that were sold to summer tourists for money that supplemented the grocery bills and paid for school clothes and all of the extra things that were needed to help us to survive.

They hooked rag rugs and did embroidery, which they sold to neighboring farmers and to town people.

And on top of all that they held all kinds of socials and dances to raise money for the meetings that were held to bring changes in education, in health and in trying to secure land for our people.

They were the force behind changes to the Indian Act, the organizing to fight for land claims, to protest logging and mining, which would destroy their children's inheritance.

They fought for language preservation, changes to the educational system and to make it possible for their children to go to universities. They went to universities themselves, got degrees

and struggled to make changes within the academy and they continue still to do that work every single day.

They became lawyers and doctors, historians and dentists. Teachers and nurses. They organized and continue to lead demonstrations to bring justice for their people.

They publish books, do beautiful art, produce films and documentaries, they write poetry and sing songs celebrating their people. They make quilts, do beading workshops, baby-sit grandchildren and stand strong to protect the water.

There is not one single thing that has benefited our people throughout our history and continues to benefit them that does not have the imprint of a strong woman or women.

Yeah, Sophie Gregoire Trudeau can hold the hand of her very privileged, powerful husband and tell Canadian women to celebrate their men and son's on International Women's Day, but sorry Sophie, as much as I love my sons and brothers, it is the women in my family and community that I celebrate on this one very special day.

These women are the strength of our people. They are the revolutionaries and the revolution!

Aiy hi, merci, thank you Zoë, Anna, Winona, Roxanne, Verna, Cindy, Bailey, Samantha, Karon, Tanice, Sheila, Marie, Rose and Rose, Tasha and Tasha, Priscilla, Cheryl, Glenda, Louise, Raven, Omeoso, Christine, Marilyn, Marjorie, Donna, Ruth, Celeste, Sylvia, Janet, Brenda, Laurie, Boots, TJ, Theresa, Amanda, Twyla, Angela, the list goes on and on ...