

- Wilfred Johnston from Teslin, Yukon.
- Asivak Koostachin from Toronto, Ontario.
- Alicia Sayers from Garden River First Nation, Ontario.
- Charlotte Qamaniq from Igloolik, Nunavut.
- Jeff K. Ward from Victoria, British Columbia.
- Jessica Yee from Akwesasne, Ontario.

Congratulating this year's Role Models, NAHO also welcomes Scotiabank as its only corporate sponsor. As part of the Role Model program, Scotiabank will provide career information to Aboriginal youth on the potential for fulfilling careers in the banking sector.

"We are thrilled to join this program and applaud the National Aboriginal Role Models Program for 25 years of making a difference for Aboriginal youth," said Cory Garlough, Scotiabank Vice President, Global Employment Solutions. "I would also like to thank this year's Role Models as they reach out to Aboriginal communities across the country to encourage youth to achieve their goals. As a recognized diversity leader, we have long known that in order for us to succeed, we need to ensure that young people have the skills and encouragement they need to succeed."

NAHO is also very excited to announce the new Role Model Program National Spokesperson for 2009-2011 is Lucie Idlout, a well known performing artist from Iqaluit, Nunavut.

"Determination, a dream and drive are ingredients for success. First Nations, Inuit and Métis youth have the spirit to succeed and these role models are a prime example of that," says Idlout.

She goes on to say, "The NARMP role models are leading the way and creating new realities within our communities and showing there are no limits to what can be achieved. They are innovative and have demonstrated this through how they adapt modern tools and couple them with traditional beliefs and customs."

The NAHO Chairperson Susan Dahlseide, the 12 Aboriginal Role Models and the 2009 – 2010 NARMP spokesperson, Lucie Idlout will be available to answer questions after the award ceremony at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Gatineau, Quebec at 9:00 p.m.

The National Aboriginal Health Organization is an Aboriginal-designed and -controlled body that works to influence and advance the health and well-being of Aboriginal Peoples through knowledge-based strategies.

For more information on the National Aboriginal Role Model Program, visit www.naho.ca/rolemodel.

For media inquiries, contact:

Colleen Patterson, Communications Officer

Tel: (613) 237-9462 ext. 559 / Toll Free: 1-877-602-4445 ext. 559

Cell: (613) 863-9001 / E-mail: cpatterson@naho.ca

National Aboriginal Role Model Program materials include:

- Biographical information of the National Spokesperson and 12 role models
- Posters and trading cards of the National Spokesperson and 12 role models

BACKGROUND

LEAD YOUR WAY!

2009 National Aboriginal Role Models

The National Aboriginal Role Model Program celebrates the accomplishments of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis youth aged 13 to 30.

Lead Your Way! inspires Aboriginal youth to strive to reach their goals.

Each year, 12 Aboriginal role models are nominated by their peers. They are selected for their achievements, leadership, and innovation. Throughout the year, the role models will attend celebrations, school functions, workshops, and conferences to share their stories with other Aboriginal youth.

Lead Your Way! is hosted by the National Aboriginal Health Organization and funded by Health Canada.

The National Aboriginal Role Model Program aims to:

- Promote healthy lifestyles and self-esteem among Aboriginal Peoples.
- Strengthen Aboriginal identity.
- Create positive public images of Aboriginal Peoples.
- Facilitate availability of Aboriginal Role Models to Aboriginal youth and communities.
- Influence behaviours and attitudes of Aboriginal youth toward healthy lifestyles.
- Foster Aboriginal-inspired leadership.

Our first National Spokesperson was Jordon Tootoo. In 2004, he helped launch the program and encouraged Aboriginal youth to nominate their role models from their communities.

James Makokis served as National Spokesperson from 2007-2009.

This year, we are excited to have Lucie Idlout as the 2009-2011 National Spokesperson who will help promote the program.

Posters and trading cards of the 12 role models will be sent to Aboriginal schools across Canada. The role models will visit Aboriginal communities throughout the year, where they will attend community celebrations and visit schools to talk about their experiences.

The National Spokesperson for the program was selected by an advisory committee and will hold the position for two years. The spokesperson will attend conferences to promote the program to communities and Aboriginal youth. The spokesperson's poster will be sent across Canada with the role model posters.