

# Niigaanibowaad: FrontRunners



With Murray Sinclair, Marie Wilson, and Chief Wilton Littlechild, Truth and Reconciliation Commission commissioners, former Premier David Peterson behind, Chief Bryan Lahore of the Mississauga of the First Credit, and Janet Minor, Treasurer of the Law Society. In the front row: William Mersey, Fred Harper, Chief Charlie Nelson, Bill Chippeway & Patrick Bruyere. Wab Kinew is to the right at the podium.

On Thursday, November 20, the Aboriginal Issues Working Group at Redeemer worked in collaboration with OISE and the Aboriginal Rights Support Group of Trinity St Paul's, Bloor Street and Bathurst Street United Churches to present the film **Niigaanibowaad: FrontRunners**. The film tells the story of nine residential school survivors, who ran the last lap with the torch of the 1967 Pan Am Games but, were not allowed to enter the stadium.

As part of the evening, these runners were present and shared details of their stories along with another survivor of residential schools and a water walker, Violet Caibaiosai.

**Charlie Nelson:** Ojibwa and Chief of Roseau River First Nation in Southern Manitoba, formerly a wellness counsellor at Ginew (Golden Eagle) Health Centre, Roseau River. Charlie is a pipe keeper for his ancestors and practices traditional teachings and spirituality.

**Patrick Bruyere:** Ojibwa from Sagkeeng First Nation, 135 km northeast of Winnipeg. A long-time administrator for Sagkeeng First Nation, Patrick has returned to traditional teachings and spirituality, including the honoured role runners play by continuing to run and walk daily as an elder.

**William Merasty:** Was the only Cree runner in the original group and from Pelican Narrows, Saskatchewan. It is William holding the torch on the

publicity about this event. He has been an educator, administrator and now is writing a book on the Cree language.

**Bill Chippeway:** Ojibwa from Lake Manitoba First Nation, today Bill is an Aboriginal Liaison Officer at a federal corrections institution in Edmonton. Bill has returned to traditional teachings and spirituality and works to enhance and heal the lives of Aboriginal prisoners.

**Violet Caibaiosai:** is a Grandmother and one of the Water Walkers who have walked the Great Lakes. She was a counsellor at Ginew Wellness centre, Roseau River, and has taught at Red River college.

The filmmaker is Laura Robinson, a free-lance writer, journalist and filmmaker. She is one of three producers of FrontRunners along with Lori Lewis and Buffalo Gal Pictures. Laura is the playwright on which the film is based and adapted it to film. Laura is from Ontario and has covered sport and First Nation issues for nearly 25 years. The film was also made possible by the United Church of Canada that came on board in 2006 to help fund the making of the film. It aired on APTN in November 2007 and is distributed worldwide by the National Film Board. Congregations across Canada use this film to initiate discussion on truth, reconciliation and right relations. 