



Indigenous Non-Profit Leadership in Ontario

BIPOC FELLOW
JULIE SERVANT



Zachary K. Kamp; MacDermid, R. (2022) BIPOC Fellowship – Sustainability, Diversity and Inclusion photograph, Sustainable Eastern Ontario. Retrieved February 7, 2022, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jkglu-m9M3ol&fbclid=IwARo5fT17D245m8Q_L1YbZ1ZaT1v5Qgum7TpeH-0VPva9VU090.

The Sustainable Capacity Foundation (SCF) knows the importance of uplifting and supporting BIPOC in the environmental sector. In fact, the BIPOC Fellowship program started because Founder Kristina Inrig noticed that *“there was a clear lack of diversity in the environmental sector, particularly among leaders of small-shop organizations”*. For this reason, SCF is proud to award a \$10,000 grant, as a part of the BIPOC Fellowship program, to biologist Julie Servant.

Julie is the Executive Director of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Network (FABN) and Former Runner for the Indigenous Circle for Canadian Biosphere Regions, who has been hard at work educating others on how we can protect our land and dismantle narratives surrounding Indigenous people. Julie grew up with both Anishinaabe and French-Canadian heritage; her grandmother is of the M'Chigeeng First Nation on Manitoulin Island. She now resides in Southeastern Ontario but has lived all over Canada which allowed her to gain an advanced socio-ecological perspective.

Julie also took a multidisciplinary approach to education. She studied Biology at Vancouver Island University, because of her interest in plant medicine. The intersection of human health and ecology is what led Julie into the professional space she now occupies in the non-profit sector.

When Julie moved back to Ontario and first became active in non-profit leadership, she noticed that *“board members...conservation players and – organizations [were] like, –*

–Well there's no native people here. Where are the native people?”. To challenge that mentality, Julie would announce, *“I'm right here”*, and began educating others on *“land acknowledgments and started talking more about... where the [Indigenous] communities are”*.

Julie's Indigenous knowledge comes into play in other aspects of her life too: *“Wisdom is represented by the beaver”*, says Julie, *“because the beaver knows how to use its skills and its gifts, and that's what it does”*. Like the beaver, Julie is *“hoping to find... where [her] skills can best be used for the land”*.

Julie's hard work, knowledge, and skills led her to FABN. FABN is the 12th out of 19 biosphere regions in the country and encompasses an area of 2700 sq. km. FABN's mission is to implement the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere programme to improve relationships between people and their environments. The work Julie and her team does is impactful and aligns with their mission; they provide scientific educational material, a variety of kid-friendly nature programs, and facilitate local environment-centric events. Their vision is also one that can be appreciated by many: to contribute to strengthening sustainable community development, celebrating the interconnectedness of nature, livelihood, well-being and culture, for this and future generations.

When Julie is not working towards a more equitable future, she spends her time researching health, learning land-based skills, and playing lego and Minecraft with her two children.