



## Kay Givens McGowan

(1942 - )

*Inducted: 2009*    *Era: Contemporary*    *Locale: Grosse Ile*    *Group: Native American*  
*Area(s) of Achievement: Native American Rights, Women's Rights*

Few can claim to have made a difference on a national level. Kay Givens McGowan attained international recognition not once but three times, even helping to draft a United Nations' document relating to indigenous peoples.

McGowan, an American Indian of Choctaw/Cherokee heritage, was a social activist all her life. She helped found First Step, a domestic violence shelter in southeast Michigan, as well as DARE, the Downriver Anti-Rape Effort. The Michigan Citizens Lobby, with McGowan as director, led the successful effort to pass generic drug and auto repair legislation, both regarded as models of progressive public policy. She also coordinated the statewide petition drive to repeal the sales tax on groceries and medications.

While earning a doctorate in anthropology, she began teaching Native Studies and women's studies courses at the University of Toledo, Wayne State University, Eastern Michigan University, and Marygrove College. At the latter, she founded the Ethnic Studies program.

In 1995, she was named a delegate to the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women. For a year afterward, she dedicated her time to speaking out about issues that women faced around the globe.

In 2005, as a board member of the National Indian Youth Council, she traveled to Switzerland to represent American Indians at deliberations resulting in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In 2008, she addressed the United Nations' Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

McGowan, an accomplished writer, contributed an essay to the book *Make a Beautiful Way: The Wisdom of Native American Women*.