



Native Women's
Association of Canada



L'Association des
femmes autochtones
du Canada

Annual Report:
**United Nations Declaration on the Rights of
Indigenous Peoples Act Implementation**

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ABOUT NWAC

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is a national Indigenous organization representing political voices of Indigenous women, in all their diversity, in Canada. Including First Nations-on and off reserve, status, non-status, and disenfranchised-Inuit, and Metis. As a grassroots association guided by Indigenous women's organizations from across the country, NWAC was founded on a collective goal to enhance, promote, and foster social, economic, cultural, and political well-beings of Indigenous women within their respective communities and Canadian societies.

For more than 50 years, NWAC has been advocating for Indigenous women, in all their diversity, in Canada. Through advocacy, policy, and legislative analysis, NWAC works to preserve Indigenous cultures by advancing the well-being of all Indigenous women in all their diversity, as well as their families and communities.

PROJECT SUMMARY

In the UN Declaration Act (UNDA) Implementation project, NWAC is supporting Justice Canada's efforts to align the laws of Canada with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples. Through active participation and engagement activities, like the UNDA Implementation engagement session, NWAC seeks to support and contribute to the full implementation of UNDRIP in Canada. Through this process of working with Indigenous communities and conducting analysis, research, and engagement, NWAC provides recommendations and advice to Justice Canada on UNDRIP implementation. In doing so, NWAC will work to develop and disseminate resources education and information on UNDRIP and its implementation in Canada. To ensure this is informed by community needs, NWAC hosted engagements, including surveys and Roundtables, to obtain feedback on UNDRIP implementation, key priorities, and resource needs.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: ROUNDTABLE

Background

This engagement session had 12 participants, including board members and delegates from NWAC's Provincial and Territorial Member Association. Representing four provinces (New Brunswick, Alberta, Quebec, and British Columbia) and three territories (Northwest territories, Yukon, and Nunavut). This UNDRIP/UNDA focused engagement session was held on September 20th, 2024 at NWAC's National Headquarters in Gatineau, Canada. This engagement session was one of the many workshops held during NWAC's annual general assembly. The UNDA

implementation engagement session was facilitated by UNDRIP expert Sara Mainville and was supported by expert panelist Brenda Gunn.

[Sara Mainville:](#)

Sara Mainville is a subject-matter expert in Crown-Indigenous relations, UNDRIP, Treaty 3, and Anishinaabe Inakonigewin. Sara is a talented lawyer and an active member of the Ontario Bar (2005) and the BC Bar (2022), with specific matter approvals to practice in Nunavut and Quebec. In 2014, Sara was elected as Chief of Couchiching First Nation where she ensured the First Nation had a strong policy and social media presence. Sara uses their experience as a former Chief to help leadership work past difficult issues by leveraging Indigenous forms of dispute resolution that encourage discourse and grassroots solutions. Sara sees herself as a life-long learner willing seeking to better understand Indigenous knowledge systems across Canada.

[Brenda Gunn:](#)

Brenda Gunn is a proud Métis woman and a law professor with the University of Manitoba where they combine academic research with activism. Brenda is recognized for pushing for greater recognition of Indigenous peoples' inherent rights as determined by their own legal traditions. Brenda leverages their expensive experiences to participate in the international Indigenous peoples' movement. Recently, Brenda developed a handbook that is one of the main resources in Canada on understanding the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. They have also provided technical assistance to the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

[Discussion Questions](#)

The expert panelists led discussions based on the following engagement questions:

- What was your knowledge prior to this session on UNDRIP and its implementation in Canada?
- How could NWAC and/or the Government of Canada better share information on UNDRIP and its implementation in Canada with community members?
- Based on the presentation on UNDA and the areas it will impact Canadian law, do you have any priorities for its implementation? Are there any areas of UNDA which require greater consultation with Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people and/or gender-based analysis be included in the UNDA implementation process?
- How would you like to see Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people and/or gender-based analysis be included in the UNDA implementation process?

- Are there any specific topics that you recommend NWAC focus on or bring to discussions with Justice Canada on UNDRIP?

Engagement Session Summary

To frame discussions, the facilitator began with a short presentation on UNDRIP and its implementation in Canada. In doing so, the speakers discussed the importance of international human rights and the United Nations Declaration in changing Canadian law to better respect Indigenous rights. Sara highlighted the power of the UN Declaration in bringing socioeconomic cultural rights on the same level as political rights, as well as the power of Human Rights language in changing how states and countries of regarding misconceptions with UNDRIP as a whole – presenting on the misinformation spread on social media about the UN Declaration and the need for caution and carefulness in the approach to Indigenous self-determination. They concluded with focusing on the topic of gender-based issues and the need for a practical approach to implementation.

After presenting, the facilitator-initiated conversation about UNDRIP with the engagement session participants using discussion questions provided by NWAC. The discussion involved topics such as accessing their prior knowledge of UNDRIP and its implementation in Canada. Through this conversation, the facilitators found a common need for simplified, accessible resources to be provided to the PTMAs and the wider public. These resources hope to fill the gaps that participants discussed feeling intimidated and not understanding UNDRIP documents. Another topic that was discussed was how NWAC can support in sharing information. This brought forward many recommendations as well as barriers to information being proved to Indigenous communities that NWAC will now focus on bridging.

A significant area of discussion was specific components of UNDRIP that require greater consultation with Indigenous women, in all their diversity. Many participants brought forward unique ideas depending on the region they were representing. Overall, this discussion brought forth a better understanding of what Indigenous communities across Canada require for NWAC specifically to work with Justice Canada on UNDRIP. This section was very in-depth and brought forth many points of focus for NWAC to do more analysis and research with the goal of furthering our engagement with Justice Canada on the implementation on UNDRIP and the UNDA Action Plan in Canada.

Summary of Findings

As mentioned above, many different topics were discussed during the UNDA implementation engagement session that brought forth many suggestions, opinions and recommendations from the participants and UNDRIP specialists – the first being the disconnect with Indigenous communities and the access and understanding of UNDRIP. Though an open discussion, it was

discovered that the majority of participants did not have much knowledge on UNDRIP prior to the session. This topic brought forth a lot of discussion of recommendations on how NWAC could assist with providing accessible resources and disseminating information. The participants discussed the importance on simplified information (UNDRIP and information shared with PTMAs from now on). They suggested that NWAC develop focus groups to continue discussions with the PTMAs after the workshop to ensure there is an open flow of information and communication with the PTMAs and Indigenous communities regarding the implementation of UNDA. There was also a desire for education and training to be done on what UNDRIP is a more simplified terminology. This is to ensure the PTMAs are aware of the project and can confidently inform their communities about UNDA project and how it affects them.

Another point of discussion was areas of UNDRIP that require greater consultation from Indigenous women in all their diversity. All attendees shared the importance of having inclusive governance councils that represent all communities' members (women, men, Elders, and LGBTQ+ individuals) and all community members (First Nations, Métis, Inuit). The workshop brought forth the conclusion that topics like MMIWG and child welfare policies need to have greater consultation with Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people. The participants felt due to systemic racism and oppression, the experiences of Indigenous women in all their diversity needed to be prioritized in implementation to ensure honesty and to protect their community's rights. This area of discussion also brought forth the topic of Indigenous distrust with police, authorities and Justice Canada. For this reason, some areas of UNDRIP need to have further collaboration with Indigenous community members to foster trust and feelings of safety within Indigenous communities.

Recommendations and Next Steps

Overall, the UNDA Implementation roundtable was a successful event. The workshop concluded with some main closing thoughts brought forward by the UNDRIP topic specialists and the PTMA's representation Indigenous voices across Canada.

Overarching recommendations included:

- Indigenous perspectives, including those of Indigenous women in all their diversity, must be represented in the implementation of UNDRIP and the UNDA Action Plan in Canada.
- Community members must be continued to be engaged to ensure the effective implementation of UNDRIP in Canada.
- Federal departments must internally analyze their own policies (and the role these policies can play in continuing systemic racism) to ensure alignment with UNDRIP.
- Significant work is required to increase education and awareness on Indigenous rights and UNDRIP implementation in Canada.

Through these recommendations, NWAC will conduct an additional community-level survey to determine what resources would be beneficial to increase education and awareness on UNDRIP and where there are large gaps in information that NWAC could help bridge. In addition to this, NWAC will continue engaging with experts and community members to advance and communicate priorities on UNDRIP implementation with partners at Justice Canada.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: NATIONAL SURVEY

The UNDA Implementation Survey was created with the goal to engage Indigenous women in all their diversity on their opinions and understanding of Canada's implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) and the UN Declaration Act (UNDA) Action Plan. The survey had 112 responses from Indigenous peoples from 10 provinces and 1 territory (Northwest Territories). The information collected from the survey has helped in informing and structuring NWAC's future work and engagement on UNDRIP and the implementation of UNDA in Canada.

Summary of Findings

The survey was responded to by 112 First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples across Canada. Throughout the survey a common theme of who was participating was found. The Indigenous group that responded the most to the survey was First Nations peoples which made up of 80% of the survey participants. It was found that Metis people were the second most recorded participant group at 11% and Inuit being the least recorded group at 5%. There was a similar theme within what provinces survey participants were from. It was found that the most documented provinces that participated in the UNDA Implementation Survey were from Ontario (29%) and Alberta (22%). There was a very little to no responses from participants residing in Northern Canada. There was only one participant from the Northwest Territories, while there were zero responses from Indigenous peoples residing in Nunavut and Yukon. It was found that the most common age group of the survey participants was 30-39 (29%) and 40-49 (27%). The least common age group that participated in the survey was the Indigenous youth, from the ages of 18-24 (4%) and 25-29 (5%).

The survey responses provided significant insight into community-level knowledge and understanding of UNDRIP. The survey responses found that the most reported level of understanding of UNDRIP was fair (31%). The second most common level of understanding of UNDRIP was Good (26%). The survey also helped compile information regarding how many of the participants wanted to learn more about UNDRIP. It was found that 82% of the survey demographic were interested in learning more about UNDRIP. The survey was also designed with the goal in determining what topics or concerns of UNDRIP that the greater Indigenous communities would like to have NWAC focus on. The main reported topics found in the survey

responses were the Right to Self-Determination (17%), MMIWG2S+ (16%), environmental Rights (16%), and Child Welfare (14%). The main topics chosen from the survey will be further addressed and discussed Justice Canada as it relates UNDRIP implementation. These topics will also allow for the greater Indigenous community to learn more through NWAC creating resources and learning tools all focusing on the Right to Self-Determination, MMIWG2S+, Environmental Rights and Child Welfare.

A full summary of survey responses can be found in Appendix A.

Next Steps

The findings from the survey presented how NWAC will be moving forward with next steps regarding the implementation of UNDA. The survey provided, that more information and education was required and requested by the greater Indigenous communities. NWAC will shift the UNDA project to include further education of what UNDRIP is and how it can affect Indigenous peoples in Canada. The created UNDRIP information and education will focus on the three main factors, right to self-determination, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit plus (MMIWG2S+) and Environmental Rights, as requested by the survey participants.

Through the findings in the survey, it was determined that NWAC will create educational UNDRIP resources in the form of fact sheets, social media campaigns and online information sessions and/or webinars. In the 2024-2025 fiscal year, NWAC focused on developing fact sheets and social media campaigns, with further work involving interactive engagements being planned for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

In response to the results of the survey, a [fact sheet](#) outlining UNDRIP and its implementation in Canada, was developed and disseminated on March 1st, 2025. It was posted to NWAC's resource page and on NWAC's social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn).

Brenda Gunn, an expert on UNDRIP, was also contracted by NWAC to create more in-depth UNDRIP fact sheets focused specifically on rights and Indigenous women's perspectives. These fact sheets are on the following topics:

- Indigenous Women and Self-Determination
- Rights of Indigenous Women
- Participation in Decision-Making

These resources will also be shared directly with survey participants who requested to receive updates about UNDRIP-focused resources developed through this project.

ENGAGEMENT WITH JUSTICE CANADA

NWAC met regularly with Justice Canada throughout the year to receive updates and contribute feedback on Justice Canada's work on UNDRIP implementation. Through these bilateral meetings, NWAC provide feedback on several UNDRIP-related internal documents, including federal slide decks on UNDRIP and its implementation and federal guides to assist in applying UNDRIP. Additionally, NWAC met with Justice Canada teams to provide feedback on UNDRIP reporting processes at the federal level.

In the bilateral meetings with Justice Canada, NWAC also shared feedback with the department about what we had heard through our engagements, as well as the resources we had developed throughout the year. This was done with the goal of informing Justice Canada on needs and priorities regarding UNDRIP implementation.

CONCLUSION

Overall, in the 2024-2025 fiscal year, NWAC has engaged significantly with Justice Canada to support the alignment of Canada's laws with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as outlined by the UN Declaration Act. In doing so, NWAC has completed community outreach in determining the greater Indigenous community's prior knowledge of UNDRIP, areas of focus of NWAC regarding UNDRIP and resources required. In response to feedback received through community outreach, NWAC subsequently developed UNDRIP-focused educational resources and provided feedback to Justice Canada on identified needs and priorities. In the following 2025-2026 fiscal year, NWAC will continue to work with Justice Canada regarding UNDRIP, community outreach and creating more UNDRIP-focused resources.

Appendix A: UNDA Implementation Survey Responses

1. Are you 18 years of age or older?
 - Yes: 112 Responses
 - No: 0 Responses

2. Which of the following do you use to identify yourself?
 - First Nations: 92 Responses
 - Inuit: 6 Responses
 - Metis: 13 Responses
 - Other: 4 Responses

3. What is your age?
 - 18-24: 4 Responses
 - 25-29: 6 Responses
 - 30-39: 32 Responses
 - 40-49: 30 Responses
 - 50-59: 22 Responses
 - 60-64: 13 Responses
 - 65+: 5 Responses

4. What gender do you identify with?
 - Woman: 102 Responses
 - Two-Spirit: 8 Responses
 - DO not wish to disclose: 1 Response
 - Other: 1 Response

5. Which province or territory do you currently live in?
 - Alberta: 25 Responses
 - British Columbia: 13 Responses
 - Manitoba: 17 Responses
 - New Brunswick: 2 Responses
 - Nunavut: 0 Responses
 - Northwest Territories: 1 Response
 - Nova Scotia: 4 Responses
 - Ontario: 32 Responses
 - Prince Edward Island: 1 Response

- Quebec: 3 Responses
- Saskatchewan: 9 Responses
- Yukon: 0 Responses

6. How would you describe where you live?

- Rural: 44 Responses
- Urban: 60 Responses
- Remote: 8 Responses
- Other: 3 Responses

7. Have you heard of UNDRIP before?

- Yes: 75 Responses
- No: 25 Responses
- Maybe: 12 Responses

8. What is your current knowledge of UNDRIP?

- Exceptional: 4 Responses
- Very Good: 6 Responses
- Good: 29 Responses
- Fair: 37 Responses
- Poor: 18 Responses
- None: 18 Responses

9. Would you be interested in learning more about UNDRIP?

- Yes: 92 Responses
- No: 1 Response
- Maybe: 19 Responses

10. What topics, in relation to UNDRIP and its implementation in Canada, interest you most?

- Right to Self-Determination: 52 Responses
- Water Rights: 33 Responses
- Environmental Rights: 50 Responses
- Gender-Based Violence: 31 Responses
- MMIWG2S+: 51 Responses
- Wellness Checks: 29 Responses
- Wrongful Convictions: 18 Responses

- Child Welfare: 44 Responses
- Other: 7 Responses

11. Do you require more tools or resources to learn more about UNDRIP?

- Yes: 71 Responses
- No: 10 Responses
- Maybe: 31 Responses
- Other: 0 Responses

12. What tools or resources would be helpful to you to learn more about UNDRIP?

- Short Fact Sheets: 70 Responses
- Online Information Sessions or Webinars: 66 Responses
- Information Videos: 50 Responses
- Social Media Campaigns: 50 Responses
- Discussion Groups: 34 Responses
- Formal Training Sessions: 46 Responses
- Other: 3 Responses

13. What do you think NWAC needs to address or focus on regarding UNDRIP?

- Consultations with the community members: 62 Responses
- Consultations with Indigenous experts on UNDRIP: 41 Responses
- Open communication on UNDRIP progress and NWAC's work: 57 Responses
- Developing UNDRIP educational resources: 57 Responses
- Communication with the federal government on UNDRIP progress: 36 Responses
- Communication with the federal government on eliminating policies that continue systemic racism and oppression: 62 Responses
- Other: 2 Responses

14. Would you be interested in attending a training session about UNDRIP?

- Yes: 82 Responses
- No: 4 Responses
- Maybe: 26 Responses

15. Would you be interested in receiving resources from NWAC about UNDRIP in the future?

- Yes: 93 Responses
- No: 5 Responses
- Maybe: 13 Responses