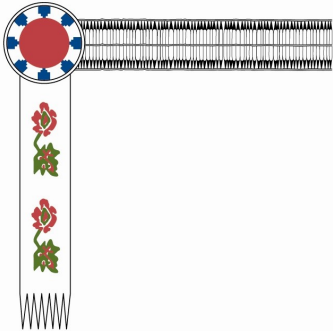


Native Women's Association of Canada

*Diabetes Self-Management Toolkit
for Aboriginal Women*

NWAC Diabetes Action Plan



Native Women's
Association of Canada

NWAC Diabetes Action Plan: An Introduction

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is an aggregate of thirteen Native women's organizations across Canada, and was founded in 1974 on the collective goal to enhance, promote, and foster the social, economic, cultural, and political well-being of Aboriginal women within both Aboriginal and Canadian societies.

NWAC is committed to advancing Aboriginal women's health through education and awareness. In this regard, NWAC has developed this action plan and accompanying toolkit to address the high rates of diabetes among Aboriginal women.

First Nations, Inuit and Métis women are at high risk for developing type 2 diabetes and gestational diabetes. Aboriginal children are also at high risk for developing type 2 diabetes. It is said, that many people have diabetes without even knowing it. This is of great concern because diabetes is a chronic disease that can damage the heart, kidneys, and feet. As such, it is important to take certain measures such as having blood glucose, lipids, and blood pressure checked at regularly. This can greatly assist in the early detection of diabetes and/or complications resulting from diabetes.

The intent of this Action Plan and its accompanying Toolkit is to provide and inform Aboriginal women of measures and best practices to increase awareness and promote the prevention of type 2 diabetes. Diabetes can be prevented; it can also be discovered early and managed effectively.

The NWAC Diabetes Action Plan and Toolkit has been developed by Aboriginal women over several years, and has been made possible through the Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative.



NWAC Diabetes Action Plan: Goals

1. Increase awareness and knowledge among Aboriginal women in Canada about type 2 diabetes, the risk factors and complications associated with the disease, and specific lifestyle changes that can prevent the onset of the disease.
2. Create awareness and knowledge of ways to prevent complications early among Aboriginal women who have diabetes.

NWAC Diabetes Action Plan: Key Elements

Aboriginal women play a primary role in maintaining the health and wellbeing of family and community; they are the life givers, main care-givers, educators and communicators within communities. Aboriginal women also have significant influence as role models. The key elements of the Action Plan acknowledges, respects, and empowers Aboriginal women in making positive change.

The three key elements to the Action Plan: Prevention, Partnerships and Cultural Approach

A. Prevention

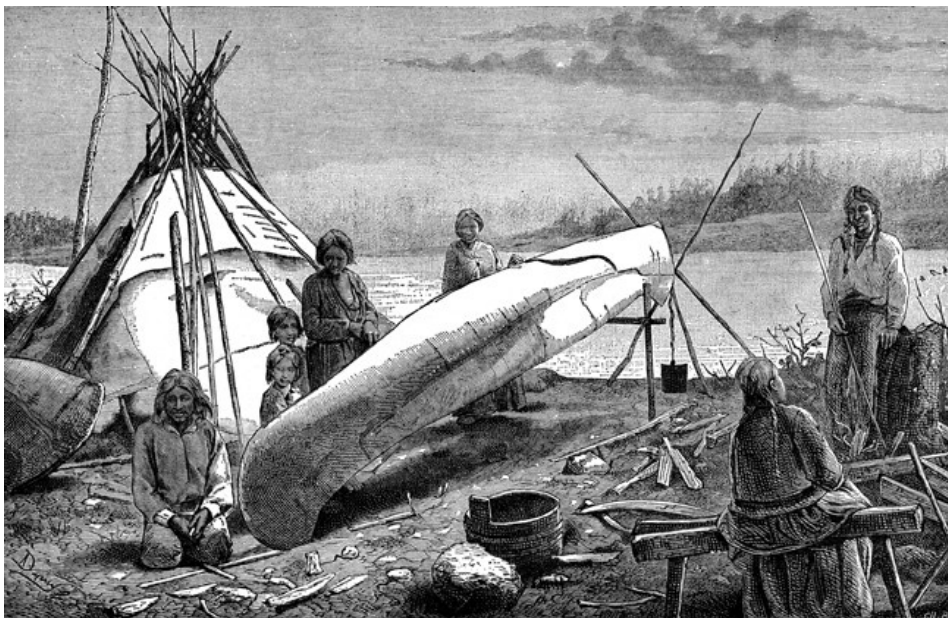
The Action Plan is prevention-oriented and is designed to decrease the prevalence of diabetes among Aboriginal women by including, but not limited to, the promotion of healthy lifestyles, improving nutritional status and physical fitness. Health promotion and reducing risk factors related to diabetes can be achieved through individual and community-wide efforts.

B. Partnerships

The development of partnerships with all stakeholders at all levels is a critical component of making the Plan successful. Prevention and control of type 2 diabetes requires collaborative efforts by community, government and non-governmental organizations alike. NWAC, as a national organization with regional and local affiliates can play a key role in aligning these efforts. Aboriginal women play an instrumental in making changes in the home and in the community.

C. Cultural Approach

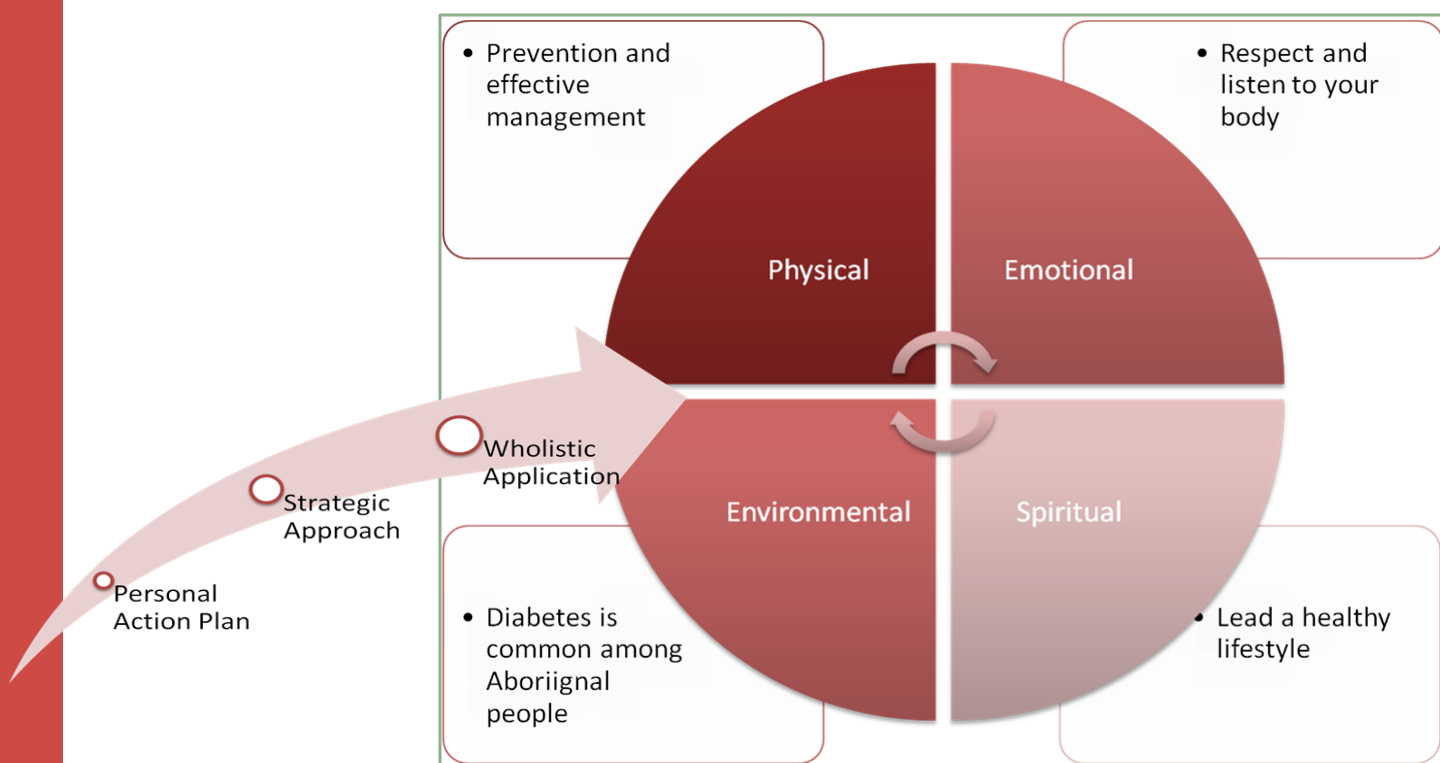
NWAC has incorporated a holistic approach to the Action Plan that reflects a traditional approach to health and wellness. With respect to the diversity of Aboriginal cultures and languages, it is recognized that expressions of holistic approaches will differ slightly from region to region. The Action Plan embraces a holistic approach for the prevention of diabetes that can be adapted.



NWAC Diabetes Action Plan: Model to Raise Awareness and Knowledge of Diabetes

The intent of the model is to holistically and strategically guide First Nations, Inuit and Métis women:

1. in the prevention and early detection of diabetes.
2. who have diabetes to prevent further complications as result of having diabetes.



NWAC Diabetes Action Plan & Model: Key Messages and Action Items

The messages found under each of the quadrants (physical, emotional, environmental, and spiritual) are intended to guide Aboriginal women in adopting specific actions to prevent and/or control diabetes. In no way are they intended to replace the advice and instructional care provided by your Health Care Professional.

Physical: Key Messages and Action Items

First Nations, Inuit and Métis women with diabetes key message

Diabetes can be managed effectively!

- Doing physical activity for 30 minutes a day helps control blood sugars, helps maintain a healthy body weight, lowers cholesterol, raises HDL (good cholesterol), and lowers blood pressure;
- Take medication as prescribed;
- Check blood sugars regularly;
- Keep blood sugars within target range as advised by a physician. Keep your blood sugar levels as close to normal as possible to help to prevent complications;
- Know your body and listen for signs of high and low blood sugars.

First Nations, Inuit and Métis Women without diabetes key message:

Type 2 diabetes can be prevented!

- Request your physician check your blood glucose, blood pressure, and lipids once a year;
- Consider lifestyle changes necessary to prevent diabetes. These may include:
- Manage your weight by eating healthy, balanced meals;
- Get regular physical activity / exercise
- Learn to manage your stress because it can cause your blood sugar to rise
- Lose weight if you are overweight

Emotional: Key Messages and Action Items

First Nations, Inuit and Métis women with diabetes key message:

Diabetes can be discovered early and managed effectively!

Know and understand the complications of diabetes and learn what you can do to avoid complications. This includes having examinations and tests. Some of these are listed:

- Visit your doctor every 3 to 6 months to have your blood sugars and blood pressure checked. Also have your feet examined and tested for feeling.
- Visit your dentist every 6 months
- Have an eye exam every year
- Cholesterol (LDH and HDL) and triglyceride test
- Urine test for protein (microalbuminuria dipstick test) and for kidney changes
- Blood glucose to test accuracy of glucometer
- Electrocardiogram (EKG)
- Exercise EKG before beginning vigorous exercise
- Ankle-brachial index (ABI) to test for arterial disease
- Electromyogram (EMG) if suspect for diabetic neuropathy

- Educate yourself about diabetes. Know the signs for high and low blood sugar. Know what you need to do to address both of these conditions.
- Learn about healthy eating.
- Look after yourself emotionally. Talk to the community health representative, public health nurse, or nurse practitioner about your fears.
- Find a support group. Talk about what works for you in managing your diabetes and any difficulties you may have.
- Have courage in living with diabetes and take control of your disease, don't let the disease control you.
- Find out the services available in your area that can help you live with diabetes.

Emotional: Key Messages & Action Items

First Nations, Inuit and Métis women with diabetes key message:

Members of your family are also at risk for developing diabetes.

- Let them know about this.
- Educate your family about diabetes.
- Look to your family for help in managing your diabetes.

First Nations, Inuit and Métis Women without diabetes key message:

Respect and listen to your body.

- Learn about the signs and symptoms of diabetes type 2 and gestational diabetes.
- Aboriginal people, a high risk group for developing Diabetes Type 2, are often first diagnosed when complications appear such as a heart attack, or stroke. Report any new symptom such as pain or discomfort in the back, usually along the bra line, chest pain, numbness or shooting pain in your hands or feet.

Environmental: Key Messages & Action Items

Key Messages for ALL First Nations, Inuit and Métis women

*Diabetes is a common condition among First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.
Diabetes is a common condition among other groups of people.
The rate of Diabetes is rising considerably all over the world.*

First Nations, Inuit and Métis Women with Diabetes:

- You are not alone, if you have diabetes.
- You are a role model to others in your family and community

First Nations, Inuit and Métis Women without Diabetes:

- By virtue of simply being Aboriginal, you are at higher risk for developing Type 2 diabetes.
- You are also at higher risk if you have an immediate family member who has diabetes.
- All of the following will increase your risk for developing Type 2 diabetes. They are: little or no exercise, high levels of stress, eating foods that are high in sugar and high in fat, and smoking

Remember: By living a healthy lifestyle you are a role model for your children. Teach your children about making healthy food choices and being physically active so, it becomes a way of life for them.

Spiritual: Key Messages & Action Items

Key Message for ALL First Nations, Inuit and Métis women:

Lead a healthy lifestyle!

- Aboriginal cultures look at healthy living holistically. Among many First Nations there is an understanding of the linkages between mind, body and spirit.
- Medical professionals (doctors and nurses) may have a different outlook than your own. They can better help you if you let them know what your needs are.
- Elders, spiritual people and healers can be important sources of support and information. Speak with them.

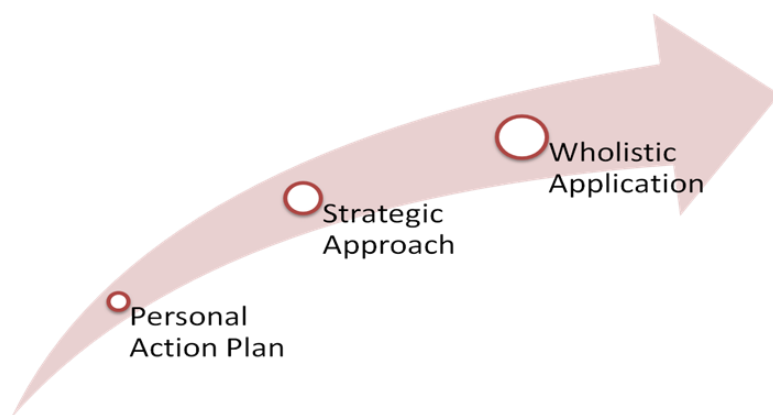


NWAC Diabetes Action Plan: *Making It Your Own!*

This supplement was created to assist the individual person in implementing the NWAC Diabetes Action Plan. As each person's health care needs and situations vary, the following is designed to guide the individual in identifying what their personal action plan. Developing and designing an Action Plan requires careful thought to ensure that it supports the individual person's lifestyle, and evolves as that person moves through life. Diabetes is a disease that requires constant care and monitoring. A personal plan will help in maintaining good overall health status and diabetic care.

Three steps to Your Diabetes Action Plan:

- Personal Plan: *Knowing yourself, your lifestyle patterns, needs and wants*
- Strategic Approach: *Knowing your medical needs and support sources*
- Holistic Application: *Knowing yourself and how to include this in your action plan*



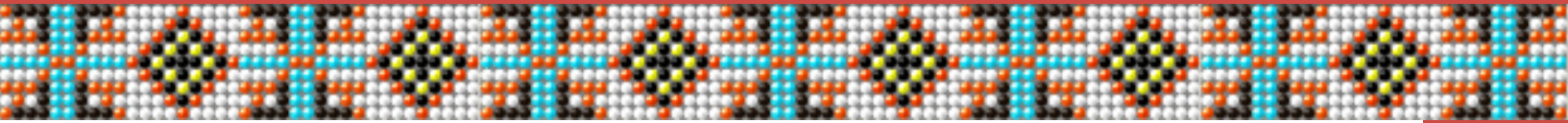
Personal Action Plan

As with all things in life, having a personal plan helps to ensure that we meet our goals, ambitions, needs and wants.

Naturally, a personal plan should revolve around our lifestyle patterns, and yet be flexible enough to incorporate changes in lifestyle patterns as you progress in your action plan.

For example, a person may normally walk her dog once during the day, but after developing her action plan may wish to incorporate a weekly nature walk with her children, thereby extending her walking and adding a holistic approach by taking advantage of the outing to talk about medicinal uses of plants or teach her children about the animals and ecosystems of the forest.

The personal plan is all about the individual. It is a plan for life that respects the individual, grows with them and ensures a health-balanced approach to diabetes management. This plan does not need to be complicated and should in fact be simple enough to explain in a few short sentences. It should be based in reality and be developed in part with the assistance of your health care provider.



NWAC Diabetes Action Plan: *Personalizing Your Plan!*

How do we start designing a personal action plan to address our diabetic needs?

Start listing your likes and dislikes in one column. In a second column list how this effects or impacts upon your diabetes. In a third column, list what action, if any can be implemented to address the item. Ask your health care professional for assistance if necessary.

Likes & Dislikes	Effects / Impacts on Diabetes	Actions: Things I Can Do!
I enjoy nature, and like taking walks in the bush. But, I don't like going out in bad weather, such as storms, heavy wind, rain, and snow.	Taking walks is a good form of exercise. Bad weather is an excuse.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can start a "Nature Walk" for my family, and inspire my community to do the same. • I can look at nature and reflect on its natural beauty in all weather conditions
I enjoy eating a wide variety of foods, and dislike dieting.	Many times I overeat, or eat food that I should not. This causes me to feel less energetic and increases my blood sugar levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can modify my food intake by learning and using the "Plate Method" • I will not "diet"

Examine these columns and think about your lifestyle, both past and present. On another piece of paper, list the past in one column and the present in a second column (ensure that related topics are beside each other). In a third column, list a potential lifestyle change that you may wish to work towards, if applicable.

Past	Present	Future
When I was younger I spent a lot of time on the land: walking, hiking, camping, fishing, and hunting.	Today I am not on the land that often, I spend most of my time watching TV, sewing and doing jigsaw puzzles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am committed to myself and my family and will start doing the things that I enjoy and make me happy • I can teach my children and grandchildren how to enjoy being on the land.

NWAC Diabetes Action Plan: *Applying A Strategic Approach!*

Many strategists will agree that a plan without an appropriate approach is like a car without the gas. Naturally, your action plan requires a strategic approach, after all what good is the car without gas?

Now, the thought of incorporating a strategic approach may sound intimidating, but it's fairly straight forward – in fact, we all do it on a daily basis. So, what is a strategic approach? It is the way in which we go about educating ourselves in order to make an informed decision. For example, before going out for the day, we check the weather report and dress accordingly; remembering to take our umbrella's if there is a 60% chance of showers. Simply put, a strategic approach is the information and the support systems, the medical care, and the community infrastructure you need to make an informed decision.

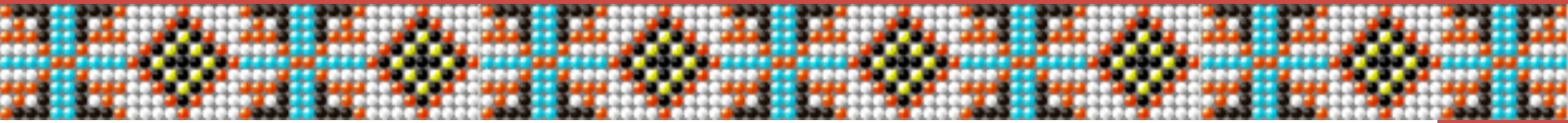
How to develop a strategic approach to your personal action plan?

Often our personal needs are overlooked as we proceed through life, and though we know we should be paying attention to them sometimes we don't. Or, sometimes, when we want to, we are unsure of what exactly they are! This section helps you identify these needs and put them into action. As diverse as we are, so are our needs.

To address this, we have separated them into four areas:

- Informational Needs: What information and resources do you need? Where will you find this, and how will you use it?
- Support Needs
- Medical Needs
- Community Infrastructure Needs





NWAC Diabetes Action Plan: *Applying a Strategic Approach!*

Informational Needs

Identify your information and resource needs, ask yourself what you really need to know about. Keep in mind that we often disregard information that does not immediately apply to us, but remember that diabetes is a chronic disease that can result in complications. So, if there is something about diabetes you should know about, but seem to not “need” right now, list these anyways.

List these needs in one column, in the second column list where and how you can gain access to this information, in the third column list how you will use this information. Ask your health care professional for assistance, they can provide this information or direct you to sources.

My Informational Needs

My Information Needs	Where & How to Get This Information	How I Will Use This Information
I need to know about foot care	Once a month, there is a free Diabetes Foot clinic at the local Health Centre.	I will go to the next foot clinic and learn about foot care.
I know nothing about diabetes and the eyes	My doctor can give me this information.	I will have my eyes examined at my next appointment.

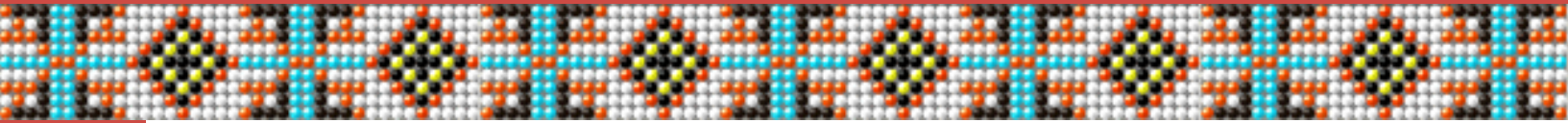
Support Needs

Identify your support needs. Be honest with yourself, and include supports for your family and friends. List in one column what your support needs are. In the second column list how this support need can be addressed. In a third column list what your plan to meet this need. Ask for assistance, your family and friends would gladly provide feedback and may have been waiting for you to ask them.

Remember, our support needs can vary depending on our circumstances and will change often, keep this in mind and update as required.

My Support Needs

My Support Needs	How This Need Can Be Met	What I Will Do!
I get lonely easily, I need company when I go walking	My family and friends can keep me company on my walks. Maybe I can start dog walking.	I can form a walking-club and make it a social activity! Start a dog walking enterprise!



NWAC Diabetes Action Plan: *Applying A Strategic Approach!*

Medical Care Needs

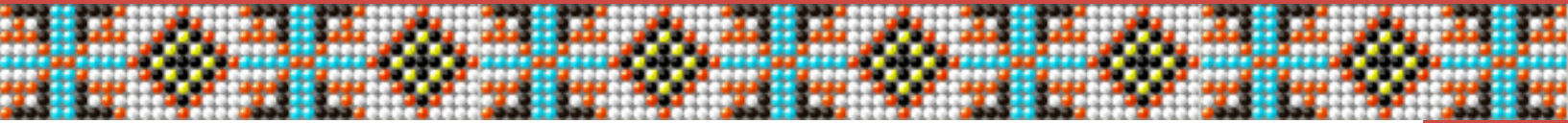
Identify your medical care needs, listing as much as possible. Your health care professional is your best source of advice and direction for this part of your Personal Diabetes Action Plan. In one column list your medical care needs, in the second column list your doctor's advice. In a third column, list how what you will do to meet your health care needs. Try to make this fun, think of interesting ways to turn medical needs into positive adventures! Enlist the advice of family and friends, and encourage them to make the same lifestyle changes!

My Medical Needs		
My Medical Needs	Medical Advice	What I Will Do!
My diabetes is controlled by my lifestyle, through diet and exercise	Use the "Plate Method" to control my daily food intake Exercise regularly, take daily walks	Learn about the Plate Method. Learn about food selection to control my blood sugars. Take a 20 minute walk every day.

Community Needs

Identify community needs. This can range from programming, policy to infrastructure. Be creative in your thinking as you prepare your strategic approach for this section. Already you may have identified what community resources are available and what your need are, list these needs in one column. In a second column, identify the source and address for fulfilling this need. In a third column, identify your goals to implement community infrastructure needs into your personal action plan.

My Community Needs		
Community Needs	Where to Find Information	Goals to Implement Community Needs
My community needs places for recreation and outdoor activity. This will improve our fitness level and the overall health of our members.	The neighboring community has a recreation centre and programming - this is a good source of information.	Speak with Chief and Council about making this a priority. Rally community support. Identify what types of activities are most suited to the space available - identify new spaces! Start a program!



NWAC Diabetes Action Plan: *Now the Holistic Application!*

Holistic Application

The final stage to designing your Diabetes Action Plan is a very personal one, and will vary from person to person. What works for one individual may not for another. Look back at the sections on your personal action plan and strategic approach. At this point, you may be asking, “now what?” and “what is a holistic application?”

To better answer these questions, let us continue with the car analogy. Imagine the action plan as a car (the body) and the strategic approach as the gas (the energy). We wish to move forward, in this case, to better address diabetes and maintain good health. To put this in perspective, we now have the car and the gas, yet are lacking the “map”. The map referring to the element that gets us from here to there, it is the source of strength that is us, the guide. In this action plan, we call it the holistic application.

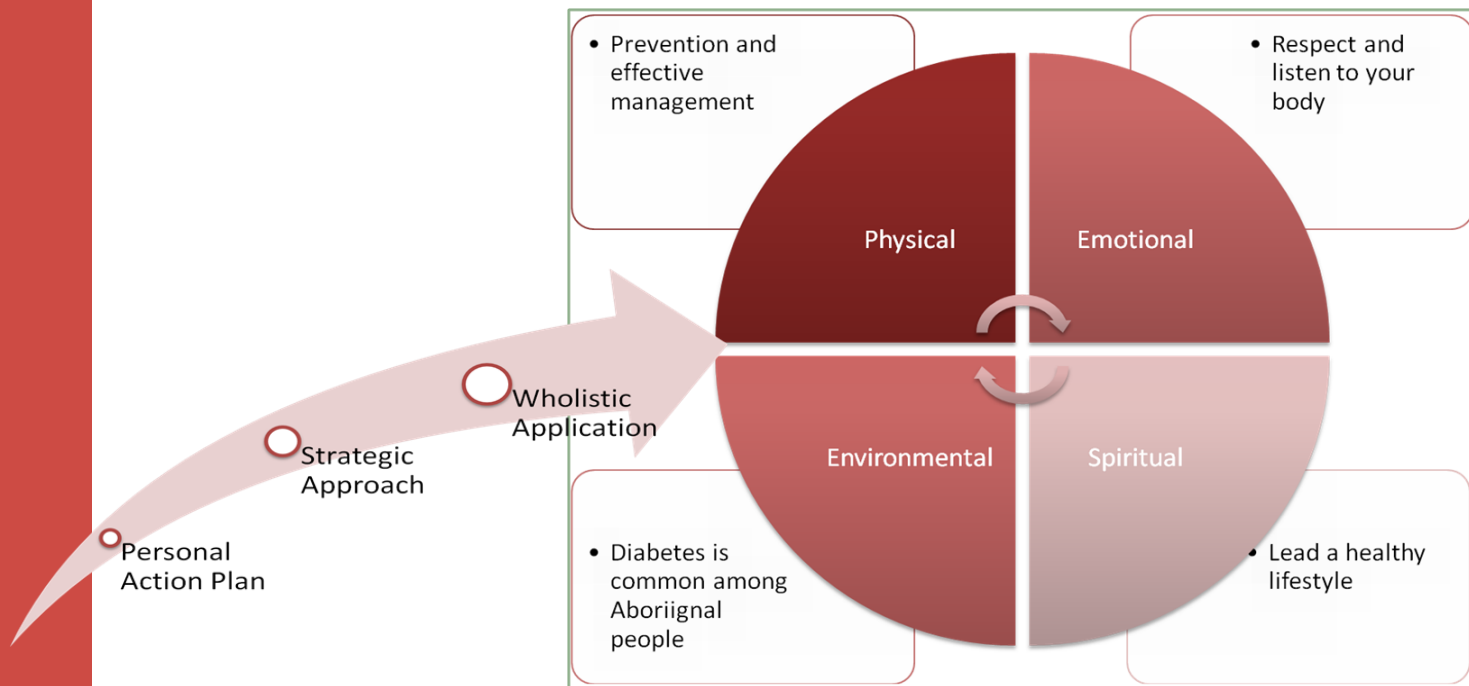
During the development of the NWAC diabetes action plan, Aboriginal women from across Canada identified the need to include cultural and tradition to guide Aboriginal women. For some this includes the application of the medicine wheel teachings, for others it is religion, and still for others it is something else.

Regardless of the “type” of holistic application, it has been identified as important to the overall health status of Aboriginal women dealing with this debilitating disease. Remember, there is no right or wrong way to do this, what is important is capturing your beliefs, mind process, and what is most important to you. It is the part that makes us who we are, and takes us to where we need to be.

Similar to the previous exercises, list in three columns. The first column should list the topic, the second column should list how this topic relates to your action plan and strategic approach, and the third column should list how you will implement or include this topic. Several examples are provided to help you.

Holistic Application		
Topic	How This Relates To My Plan	How To Implement!
I want to learn about the Medicine Wheel - and how to balance all areas of my life	Knowing who I am inside and out will help me make better decisions. Being in balance will help me identify when I need to make change or ask for assistance.	I will ask the Elders about the Medicine Wheel and about finding balance. Then I will apply this to my life, and will share these teachings with my children.
I want to learn about “relaxation” and how to calm myself and find peace	This will reduce my stress making me much happier and more willing to make positive lifestyle changes	I will ask the Elders about traditional “relaxation” exercises and make this a part of my daily routine.

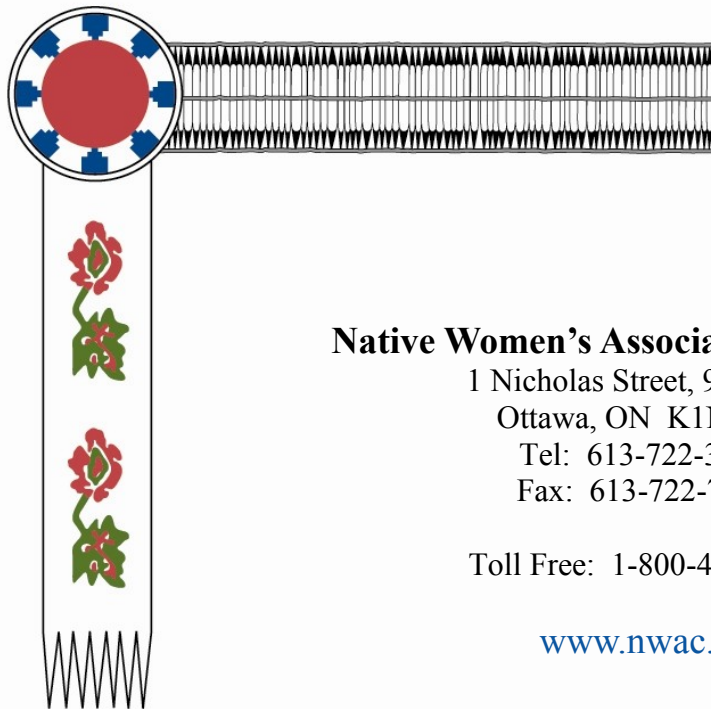
Your Personalized Diabetes Action Plan: *Reviewing & Evaluating!*



Now that you've spent some time developing a Personalized Diabetes Action Plan, it's time to review and evaluate what you have written making sure that it reflects who you are. Add, edit, and modify your Personalized Diabetes Action Plan as you see fit. Refer to your action plan daily.

Remember that your Personalized Diabetes Action Plan will constantly evolve, changing as you change, adapting as you adapt, and growing as you grow. It is an entity that is part of you.

Your Personal Diabetes Action Plan is your framework for healthy living. It is also a healthy living framework that family and friends can easily follow and incorporate without drastic changes. It is one that can enrich your life and the lives of family and friends. Diabetes is not a life sentence; it is an opportunity for positive change.



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IMPORTANT NOTICE

This toolkit was designed to supplement information and resources related to diabetes prevention, awareness and management. It was not designed to replace the valuable insight, care and treatment provided by your Health Care Professional.

Always consult your Health Care Professional