



Native Women's
Association of Canada

L'Association des
femmes autochtones
du Canada

44TH
ANNUAL
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY
HEALTH AND WELLNESS 2018

44th Annual General Assembly Health and Wellness





Roseann Martin

“ I believe health and wellness come from within. I mean the organization has to work together in order for wellness to begin and to heal. I tell people every day to “Walk your Talk” because the outside world is watching how we conduct ourselves. We are the role models for the grassroots to follow. ”

**GRANDMOTHER ROSEANN
NWAC ELDER ADVISOR**

WHAT DOES HEALTH AND WELLNESS MEAN FOR NWAC?

NWAC approaches health and wellness through a wholistic intersectional lens, understanding that it is more than a lack of illness or injury. Health must be understood from a wholistic perspective, incorporating physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, environmental, and social wellbeing. Through this understanding, NWAC works to promote all aspects of health and wellbeing, including mental health and wellness, financial health, and connection to culture as a path to healing.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Message from the President	6
Message from the Executive Director	8
The Native Women's Association of Canada	10
Introduction	10
Grandmother Moon:	10
Strategic Plan	11
Strategic Goals	12
The NWAC Logo	13
NWAC Board of Directors	14
Provincial and Territorial Member Associations (PTMAs)	15
Operational Overview	18
Incorporating Culture and Health and Wellness	21
NWAC's New Home	23
Moving Forward	23
Special Projects: NWAC's New Home	24
Department Reports	28
Special Projects	29
AWBEN	29
Financial Health and Wealth	31
You Are Not Alone	33
Honouring Indigenous Women Girls and Gender-Diverse People	35
Faceless Doll	36
Indigenous Women's Leadership Conference	37
Business, Employment and Social Development	40
Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS)	41
Aboriginal Business & Entrepreneurship Skills Training (BEST)	43
Communities at Risk (CAR)	44
Women Building Futures	44
Strategic Partnerships	46
G7 & W7 – Gender Advisory Council Discussion Panel with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau	46
Recognition of the Native Women's Association of Canada's Work	47
Next Steps	47

Legal Advocacy Group	48
Message from the Legal Unit Team Lead	49
Ongoing Files	49
National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls	50
Forced Sterilization of Indigenous Women	51
Discrimination under the Indian Act	52
Environment	52
UNDRIP	52
Federal Prisons	52
Sex Trade	52
Interventions	52
Department of Health	53
A Message from the Director of Health	54
Pathways PEKE (Partners for Engagement and Knowledge Exchange)	55
Walking the RED Path – HIV/HCV Initiative	58
Trauma Informed STBBI Resources	59
Youth Advocacy and Development	60
A Message from the Director of Youth Advocacy and Development	61
Youth Advocacy and Development Summary	61
Restoring Indigenous Spirituality in the Environment (RISE)	62
Post-Secondary Education	63
Métis Policy and Protocol at NWAC	67
Strategic Policy	68
A Message from the Director of Strategic Policy	69
Accessibility	73
Child Welfare	74
Culturally-Relevant Gender-Based Analysis	75
Coerced Sterilization	75
Drug Policy/Cannabis	76
Education (Early Learning & Child Care, K to 12, Post-Secondary)	77
Emergency Management	79
Environment & Biodiversity	80



<u>United Nations Framework on the Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)</u>	81
<u>Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) – Post 2020 Discussion Group</u>	81
<u>Energy, Climate Change, and Mining</u>	81
<u>Food & Water</u>	82
<u>Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+</u>	83
<u>Housing & Homelessness</u>	84
<u>Human Trafficking</u>	85
<u>International Policy</u>	86
<u>Languages</u>	88
<u>Legislative Review and Political Advocacy</u>	89
<u>MMIWG - National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls</u>	90
<u>Poverty Reduction</u>	91
<u>Prison Issues & Decarceration</u>	92
Communications Unit	93
<u>A message from the Director of Communications</u>	94
Looking Ahead	99
Appendix A	100
Notes	101
<u>Bibliography</u>	101





A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Wey-tk and welcome to our Elders, our Youth, our guests and observers and, of course, our NWAC delegates! I would like to begin by acknowledging the Algonquin Anishnaabeg people whose traditional and unceded territory we are gathered on today.

Over the past year, NWAC has continued our efforts to bring Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people's voices to provincial and territorial levels as well as at the national and international levels to ensure the issues impacting us, our children and our communities are brought to the forefront. These issues need to be dealt within the framework of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and not within a colonial framework.

This is why NWAC is working towards a nation-to-nation Accord with the Government of Canada.

I want to thank our incredible Board members and staff for their passion, effort and commitment. Our Board of Directors developed a new Strategic Plan inclusive of gender diversity and all Indigenous women, First Nations, Inuit and Métis. They also developed by-law 14 to move forward with clear direction. NWAC staff also accomplished extensive work since our last AGA including securing a new home for our organization.

NWAC continues to advocate for the rights of Indigenous women on many fronts. For example, we have worked on the following bills:

- ◆ Bill S-3, which amends the Indian Act in response to Descheneaux (elimination of sex-based inequities in registration);
- ◆ Bill 262, intended to help align Canadian Law with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
- ◆ Bill S-215, which amends the Criminal Code to require a court, when imposing a sentence for certain violent offences, to consider the fact that the victim is an Indigenous woman to be an aggravating circumstance;

We have also worked on:

- ◆ Addressing the overrepresentation of Indigenous women in solitary confinement; and
- ◆ The case against the forced sterilization (tubal litigation) of Indigenous women.





Additionally, we have expanded our outreach, both nationally and internationally, to further our mandate. We are growing partnerships and relationships with advocacy groups, unions, non-profits, private sector, law firms, and individuals. We are collaborating to make a difference for Indigenous women, working towards equity and the recognition of our traditional and inherent rights. We value and respect those relationships and will continue to build on them in the future.

Most importantly, in the past year, we have continued our work in regards to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. There have been times when it has been extremely challenging as we stood alongside many families, in particular, when we heard the disheartening news that the National Inquiry's request for a two-year extension was not granted.

This spring, we presented at the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues on the National Inquiry, sharing with over 60 delegates from around the world the evaluation of the National Inquiry. There is very keen interest from the international community on the pioneering work that NWAC is doing. NWAC held a very successful side event discussing issue pertaining to Indigenous women and the room was filled to capacity.

Over the next year, I hope you use your voice to keep those who are running for government accountable. The issues affecting our Indigenous women, our gender-diverse people, our children and our communities, must be heard in the House of Commons.

Thank-you to the Indigenous women and gender-diverse people across our lands for the hard work you do to help us.

Welcome to the Native Women's Association of Canada's 2018 AGA!

KUKSTEMC!
Francyne Joe, President



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

When I began working as the Native Women's Association of Canada's (NWAC) Executive Director in November 2016, the organization and its Provincial and Territorial Member Associations' (PTMA) potential for growth was evident. Working alongside our Board of Directors and NWAC staff, we took the initiative to strengthen NWAC's capacity to advocate for the social, economic, cultural and political rights and the well-being of Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people.

This year, I am pleased to report we have made enormous progress in three main areas through hard work and dedication including:


1. Expanding existing departments and creating new ones;
2. Increasing the number and scope of projects; and
3. Enhancing the capacity of our PTMAs.

Firstly, we created specific units in the office to respond to requests for information, engagement and consultation with NWAC. These units include Legal, Strategic Policy, Special Projects, Communications, and we enhanced the Finance Department. These units work collaboratively to ensure the quality of NWAC's work.

Secondly, we significantly increased in projects and services delivered at the grassroots level. Projects include Honouring Indigenous Women, Girls and Gender-Diverse People, Financial Health and Wealth, AWBEN, Communities at Risk and BEST.

Thirdly, we worked with our PTMAs on numerous initiatives. For example, we collaborated on numerous grassroots engagement sessions including food policy, early learning and childcare, languages, and Descheneaux. To assist in enhancing PTMAs capacity, we secured full-time employment for the ASETS coordinators and continued to work on ways to enhance the PTMAs capacity.





In the past year, we also improved operational capacity, dramatically increased total revenues, and are in the midst of revising and rebranding to better implement our vision for greater social, political, and economic opportunities for Indigenous women. As part of NWAC's revising, we took the long-needed step of purchasing a permanent location for NWAC's offices. This Reconciliation Project is the foundation of NWAC's Social and Cultural Innovation Centre, a hub for Indigenous healing, resiliency and economic development.

Conveniently located at 120 Promenade du Portage in Gatineau, Québec, our new home will be a centre of excellence for social and cultural innovation, with room for NWAC's growing initiatives and revenue building activities. Similarly, the new building is focusing on the strength and resiliency of Indigenous women Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people. This move will not only increase the organization's operating costs, will also enable us to provide Indigenous women Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people with the continuous support they deserve and need.

In the coming year, we at the national office will continue to expand on the progress we have made thus far. We are constantly amplifying NWAC's role in the areas of service provision, legal advocacy, and gender-based research and analysis to meet the evolving needs of Indigenous communities across the country. We will continue striving to include Indigenous culture and trauma-informed approaches into our workplace and our work.

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work with the Board of Directors and a fantastic team here at NWAC. I am looking forward to our future accomplishments as we continue to "advocate for and inspire women and families of many Indigenous nations."

SINCERELY,

Lynne Groulx, LL.L, J.D.
Executive Director



THE NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

Introduction

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is a National Indigenous Organization representing the political voice of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people in Canada, inclusive of First Nations on and off reserve, status and non-status, disenfranchised, Métis, and Inuit. An aggregate of Indigenous women's organizations from across the country, NWAC was founded on the collective goal to enhance, promote, and foster the social, economic, cultural and political well-being of Indigenous women within their respective communities and Canadian societies.

Since 1974, NWAC has established strong and lasting governance structures, decision-making processes, financial policies and procedures, and networks to help achieve its overall mission and goals. Today, NWAC engages in national and international advocacy aimed at legislative and policy reforms that promote equality for Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people, including LGBTQ+ people. Through advocacy, policy, and legislative analysis, NWAC works to preserve Indigenous culture and advance the well-being of all Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people, as well as their families and communities.

NWAC works on a variety of issues such as employment, labour and business, health, violence prevention and safety, justice and human rights, environment, early learning childcare and international affairs.

Much like a "Grandmother's Lodge", we as aunties, mothers, sisters, brothers and relatives collectively recognize, respect, promote, defend and enhance our Indigenous ancestral laws, spiritual beliefs, language and traditions given to us by the Creator.

As NWAC embarks on a new year, it will continue to grow, striving towards its strategic goals and objectives while harnessing opportunities and building on strengths. NWAC will continue building a strong, resilient organization through internal capacity building. We strive to be a full and equal participant on key issues of relevance to Indigenous women and their families in Canada. We continue to build the communications and resource capacity of PTMAs and build the leadership capacity of Indigenous women.



Grandmother Moon:

You know all women from birth to death

We seek your knowledge

We seek your strength

Some are STARS up there with you

Some are STARS on Mother Earth

Grandmother, lighten our path in the dark

Creator, keep our sisters safe from harm

Maa duu? Mussi cho

-Kukdookaa"



STRATEGIC PLAN



MISSION STATEMENT

Advocate for and inspire women and families of many Indigenous nations.



VISION STATEMENT

We envision an inclusive world that understands and respects the diversity and uniqueness of all Indigenous women and families.

Strategic Goals

The Native Women’s Association of Canada will strive to achieve its strategic goals and objectives by overcoming risks and challenges to harness opportunities that build on its strengths.

1
Building a strong, resilient organization through internal capacity building

2
Be a full and equal participant on key issues of relevance to Indigenous women, gender-diverse and their families in Canada

3
Increase the communication and resource capacity of PTMAs

4
Building the leadership capacity of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people



THE NWAC LOGO

As NWAC revises its path and direction, it is important to represent this momentum and drive to continue paving a better future for our women and their families. In doing so, NWAC implemented a new, modern logo and branding developed by an Indigenous graphic design and branding firm. The new logo incorporates culture, gender and teachings into a beautifully woven symbol of our women and gender-diverse people.

Through symbolizing the guidance of Grandmother Moon, the life-bearing gift of water, the teachings of fire, the acknowledgement of the Spirits, recognition of future generations, and the cycle of nature, strong cultural elements are represented. Additionally, reflected across from Grandmother Moon is an image of a woman looking forward into the fire feeding off the notion of lighting fire in the era of reconciliation.

In the sweeping design of the logo, NWAC's in-house Elder, Roseann Martin, sees Grandmother Moon, and a mother carrying a child in water with the four elements wind, water, earth, and fire, represented in the colours. The shape of the woman's hair is reminiscent of wind and waves, transitioning into flames as the colours shift to red. Within its circular shape, our Elder sees the cycle of the moon, and the medicine wheel, which mirrors NWAC's mission to assist our women in their process of healing and moving forward.

The Elder's interpretation of the logo reflects the intention behind the design and imagery, which integrates symbolism echoing NWAC's values. Blue represents water and women's role in protecting this important resource. Light green and brown is Mother Earth and acknowledges our unique cultural and historical traditions. Lastly, orange and red signify the goal of lighting the fire within ourselves to empower Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people across Canada.





NWAC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

NWAC's Board of Directors is presently composed of 20 members including the NWAC President, four regional Elders, four regional Youth representatives, and a representative from each PTMA. The Board representatives pass the voices of grassroots Indigenous women to the national office directing initiatives.

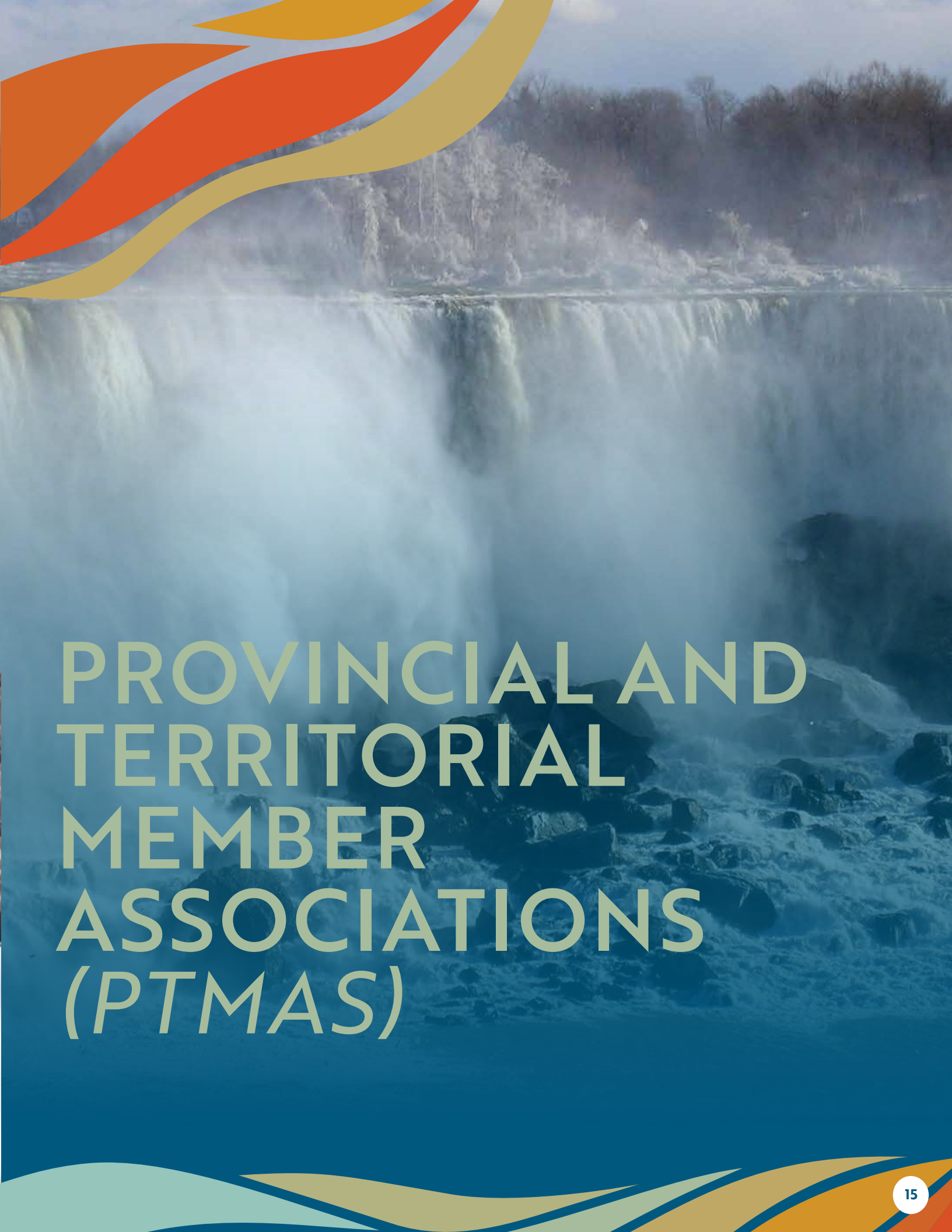
The Board is responsible for NWAC governance and sets the overall direction of the organization. As NWAC's governing body, the Board has a duty of knowledge, a duty of diligence, a duty of skill and prudence, and a fiduciary duty to the organization. Their work is critical to NWAC's success, as they set NWAC's strategic direction, participate in high-level decision-making, approve NWAC policies, and participate in committees. Over the past year, the Board of Directors, the Executive Council, the Standing Committees and the Executive Director met extensively, having developed a renewed Terms of Reference, approved several policies, set out a new Strategic Plan, and completed a review of current by-laws.




NWAC Board of Director's Committees:

- ◆ Executive Council
- ◆ Finance/Corporate Operations
- ◆ Projects Committee
- ◆ Personnel Committee
- ◆ Ad Hoc By-Law and Elections Committee
- ◆ Ad Hoc AGA Committee
- ◆ Ad Hoc Building Committee





PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS (PTMAS)



NWAC is an aggregate of Indigenous women's organizations from across the country known as Provincial and Territorial Member Associations (PTMAs). This membership gives Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people opportunities and resources to share their voice on a national level in Canada. PTMAs work for the interests of Indigenous women within their respective region. The scope of these organizations involve community initiatives, fundraising, personal-aid, and numerous development programs. PTMAs empower women and girls within their communities by functioning at a grassroots level.

Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council

YAWC is a non-profit organization uniting all Indigenous women from across the Yukon to represent many Indigenous nations. Since 1975, it has continued to build and strengthen Indigenous women from across the Yukon in accordance with the vision: to advance the interests of women of Indigenous or Inuit ancestry in the Yukon including status, non-status, and Métis. It supports and enforces the rights of the status of Indigenous women and the civil and human rights of all Native women in the Yukon and Northern B.C. Its purpose is to be the voice of Indigenous women in the Yukon, bringing their perspective forward at the national level while engaging to address issues and concerns at a more local level.

BC Native Women's Association

The BC Native Women's Association (BCNWA) is non-profit organization advancing equal opportunity for Indigenous women in British Columbia. BCNWA volunteer board members lobby and advocate for programs, services, support and legislative changes that will support Indigenous women by preserving Indigenous culture, history and language. Additionally, BCNWA networks and advances Indigenous women in education and employment and training initiatives. BCNWA is founded on collective goal to enhance, promote and foster the social, economic, cultural and political well-being of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Societies.

The Native Women's Association of the NWT

The Native Women's Association of the Northwest Territories (NWA NWT) was incorporated in 1977 to empower and support Indigenous women and their families throughout the Northwest Territories. NWA NWT's guiding principle is that all Native ancestry will be treated with dignity, respect, and equality, and benefits and services will be extended to all no matter where one lives and regardless of tribal heritage. NWA NWT is committed to being the voice of Native women in the Northwest Territories and to building relationships with all levels of government and other organizations to ensure all Native women and their families will live free from social and economic distress; to promote their sacred roles as valued and respected members in the community; and to preserve their culture, language and heritage.

Alberta Aboriginal Women's Society

The Alberta Aboriginal Women's Society (AAWS) works to provide an outlet by which Aboriginal women can identify current and historical problems afflicting Aboriginal people and provides assistance, education, and training for Aboriginal women thereby permitting them to achieve self-sufficiency and constructive interdependence with other persons. AAWS's purpose is to be the voice of Indigenous women in Alberta, bringing their perspective forward at the national level while engaging to address issues and concerns at a more local level while providing encouragement and assistance.

Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation

Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation (SAWCC) is a not-for-profit provincial organization dedicated to promoting and enhancing the status of Aboriginal women. SAWCC works to unite and empower Aboriginal, non-status and disenfranchised women through education, advocacy, research, and resource sharing. SAWCC has continued to build and strengthen Indigenous women from across Saskatchewan in accordance with the vision: to unite Aboriginal women in Saskatchewan by taking a leadership role in responding to and addressing issues of interest and concern to Aboriginal women, their families, communities and their environment.

Manitoba Moon Voices Inc.

Manitoba Moon Voices Inc. is a non-profit organization founded with the goal of supporting leadership and advancement for/by Indigenous women in the province of Manitoba. While respecting the diverse paths of self-determination of Indigenous women, MMVI is building strong connections among Indigenous women, their communities, organizations and allies across Manitoba to support our collaborative voice and empower each other. It continues to build and strengthen Indigenous women from across Manitoba in accordance with the vision: "to acknowledge, reclaim and remember the diversity of Indigenous women's roles, responsibilities in leadership and traditional governance, while honoring their accomplishments."

Femmes Autochtones du Québec (FAQ)

Québec Native Women's Association Inc. Québec Native Women (QNW) is a non-profit organization created in 1974 that defends the interests of Indigenous women from different nations of Québec, as well as Indigenous women living in urban areas. Since its inception, QNW has been acting as a voice to communicate the needs and priorities of its members, including issues of equality, rights, justice, youth, health and violence. The Association supports Indigenous women in their efforts to better their living conditions through the promotion of non-violence, justice, equal rights and health. Québec Native Women also supports women in their commitment to their communities.

Indigenous Women's Association of the Maliseet and Mi'Kmaq Territory

The Indigenous Women's Association of the Maliseet and Mi'Kmaq Territories Inc. (IWAMMT) represents the Indigenous women of New Brunswick and works to advance our rights, preserve our culture, and promote cultural education and healing in our region. Our goal is to advance the well-being of Indigenous women and girls, as well as their families and communities through activism, policy analysis, programming, and advocacy. Since the 1970's, IWAMMT continues to build and strengthen Indigenous women from across New Brunswick in accordance with the vision: "To support and empower Indigenous Women to be leaders in the traditional governance of communities and territories."

Newfoundland Native Women's Association

NNWA works to advance the well-being of Indigenous women and girls, as well as their families and communities through activism, policy analysis, programming, and advocacy. It works closely with other Indigenous women's organizations in the area to advance the social, economic, and cultural rights of Indigenous women and girls. NNWA is mandated to provide assistance, guidance and information to Indigenous women as we try to improve the socio, economic and employment benefits of Indigenous women within the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Nova Scotia Native Women's Association

The Nova Scotia Native Women's Association was formed in 1972 to address the social, political, emotional, health concerns and aspirations of Mi'kmaq women and works to encourage Indigenous women to assume a more positive and active role in their rightful place in society. Our mission is to empower Indigenous women to embrace their traditional and significant role in their communities and territories and to provide support and resources for Indigenous women to develop programs and initiatives to engage in meaningful dialogue with their communities and nations.

Aboriginal Women's Association of PEI

The Aboriginal Women's Association of PEI (AWAPEI) is committed to providing leadership and guidance in; culture, social, economic, and political aspects. AWAPEI represents the interests and concerns of all Indigenous women and in extension, their communities. The goal of AWAPEI is to enhance, support and promote the well-being of Indigenous women through capacity building, focus groups, prevention, awareness and equal opportunities. To achieve this, it is important to create new ideas, gather knowledge and share feedback collectively. Historically, AWAPEI has proven acknowledging women's health and wellness creates a sense of healing. AWAPEI recognizes Indigenous women play a significant role as agents of positive and sustainable change, for our communities. Supporting their personal leadership development supports community development. AWAPEI's motto is, "Creating Stronger Women Creates Stronger Communities."



OPERATIONAL OVERVIEW

NWAC Organization Chart

Last Updated: August 13, 2018



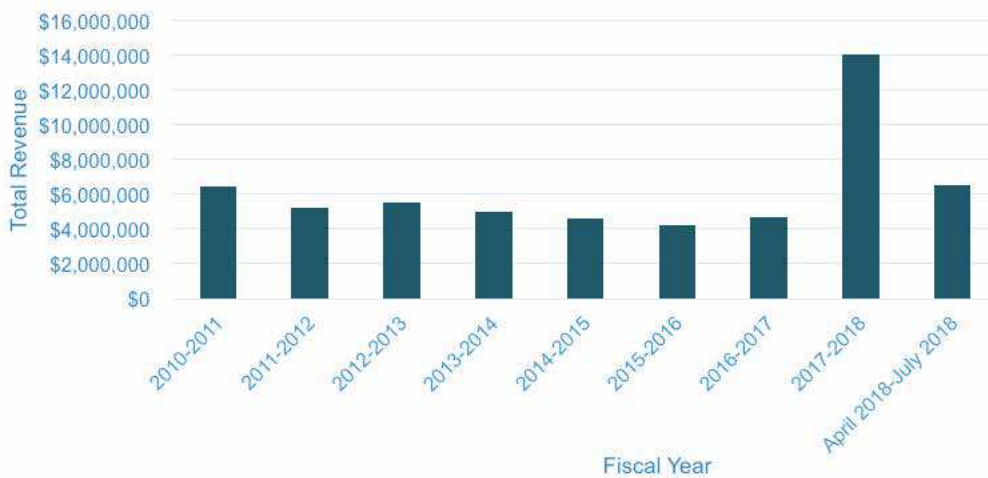
Over the past year, NWAC has undergone significant growth and improved capacity. The Executive Council, Standing Committees and Ad Hoc Committees developed a renewed terms of reference, approved policies, set out a new strategic plan as well as a review of current by-laws.

The organization reset its financial administration by implementing modernized approaches, diversifying funding, and has begun seeking revenues outside of government sources. NWAC implemented an updated, automated payroll system, hired an on-staff

Comptroller/Chartered Accountant and conducted a preliminary review of its finance manual. NWAC has also centralized management of finances, diversified funding sources, and employed two full-time proposal writers to concentrate on funding for the organization.

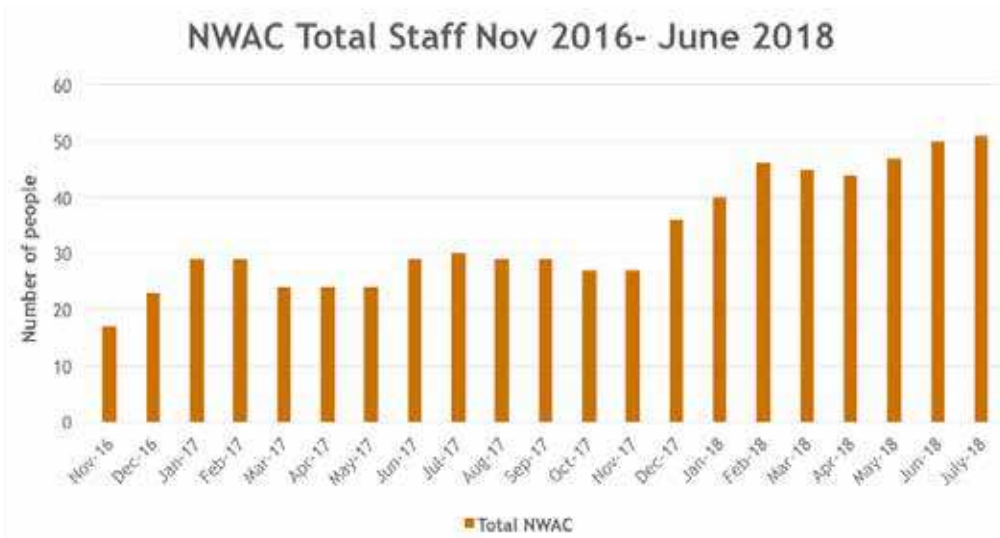
NWAC's new strategy has yielded impressive financial outcomes. For several years, NWAC's revenues were declining; however, this directional change increased revenues from \$4,651,630 in 2016-2017, to \$14,072,244 in the 2017-2018 fiscal year.

**Total NWAC Revenues:
2009-2017**



With this added funding, NWAC has built internal staff capacity, growing from 24 staff at the end of April 2017, to 51 staff as of July 2018. With this added staff capacity NWAC has enhanced the Finance, Business, Employment and Social Development, International Affairs, and Health Departments with key staff positions, and created the Special Projects and Events, Legal, Human Resources, Communications, Youth Advocacy, Strategic Policy and Corporate Departments.





This added capacity has enabled NWAC to boost its social media presence, increase focus on youth advocacy, better respond to government requests to inform policy with culturally appropriate and gender-specific analysis, and deliver more training, tools, and resources to Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people. The NWAC Youth Advocacy and Development Unit has increased the focus on youth advocacy throughout the organization. NWAC has established a Human Resources Department, created a human resources framework, and has hired an Elder to work with Human Resources integrating cultural practices and traditional knowledge into the workplace.

NWAC is improving its internal operations through standardized administrative reporting activities, and is designing a task management system to monitor project budgets, progress, and deliverables. This control system will accompany more stringent financial forecasting and monitoring of project budgets. Finance staff will receive advanced training on non-profit accounting, and the comptroller will use intelligence reports to analyze the organization's financial data.

Incorporating Culture and Health and Wellness

Incorporating a holistic, culturally-relevant framework in the workplace is essential for fostering a healthy environment for Indigenous organizations. A holistic approach will ensure the spiritual, physical, emotional and mental wellbeing of your employees is supported and respected. Incorporating culture into the organization will allow Indigenous employees to feel safe in their identity and create a space for non-Indigenous employees to develop a foundational understanding of Indigenous worldviews, which will help foster a sense of respect and community amongst staff members.

NWAC's in-house Elder leads traditional teachings, workshops, and training sessions with MWAC staff, advises on integration of culture and traditional teachings into the workplace, and is on-hand to support staff throughout the workday.



"Smudging on a daily basis becomes a way of life for all who work at NWAC promoting a healthy lifestyle. Smudging is a very powerful tool to incorporate on a daily basis. At NWAC, I'm working to incorporate health and wellness in the workplace. I begin each day by going onto all the floors before the staff arrive to smudge the offices down so that good energy comes to all who work here. Staff are always welcome to come to my office and have private sessions if needed to further enhance culture and community to our workplace."

- Roseann Martin, NWAC Elder Advisor



NWAC's New Home

Finally, NWAC has purchased a new office building at 120 Promenade du Portage in Gatineau, Québec, re-establishing equity for the organization for the first time since NWAC sold its previous location in 2009. This permanent location will yield significant savings compared to current expenditures such as office rent, will accommodate NWAC's expanding workforce, and will host new revenue generating activities. The flexibility afforded by independent revenue streams is critical to NWAC's long-term stability and despite diversifying funding sources as 84% of NWAC's total revenues were still federal government project funding.

This form of funding is approved sporadically throughout the year, often a few months before the end of fiscal year. With this in mind, NWAC's new building will host several revenue generating initiatives which to support the organization's advocacy, projects, programs, and operations.

Moving Forward

The ongoing rebranding and re-visioning is an important step towards the vision for greater social, political, and economic opportunities for Indigenous women and gender-diverse people in Canada. NWAC will continue its pursuit of stabilized, increased core funding, longer-term projects, and flexible revenue streams. These steps will contribute to a stable workplace for NWAC staff, and enhanced programs and services, consistently accessible to Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people.

Ongoing programs, project, and advocacy will be expanded, including work related to employment, labour and business, health, housing, violence prevention and safety, missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, Youth and Elder supports, justice and human rights, environment, early learning childcare, and international affairs.

SPECIAL PROJECTS: NWAC'S NEW HOME



NWAC is currently renovating 120 Promenade du Portage into a culturally relevant Indigenous hub for social and cultural innovation for appropriate, holistic services.

There will be input from Elders, Traditional Knowledge Keepers, Youth and NWAC's Board Building Committee to provide suggestions on the project and in particular incorporating honouring, healing and commemoration for Indigenous women, girls, gender-diverse people and their families throughout the building.

Collaboration with government and other partners will continue to be an important part of the planning and implementation for this gathering space.

Partners and potential partners include:

- ◇ Employment and Social Development Canada
- ◇ Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada
- ◇ Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- ◇ Canadian Heritage
- ◇ Library and Archives Canada
- ◇ Status of Women Canada

This new facility will also be the home for NWAC's administration offices for our concurrent programming.

This permanent location will yield significant savings compared to current expenditures on office rent, will accommodate NWAC's expanding workforce, and will host new revenue generating activities.

The largest of NWAC's revenue producing initiatives is the workshop and training spaces, where NWAC will offer culturally relevant, gender-based training and workshops to private, public and government sector stakeholders. These workshop spaces will also be available for rent for gatherings and meetings. These in-house workshops and training rooms are a first step towards NWAC's self-sufficiency and financial stability, while building capacity for culturally relevant, gender-based training and education to external organizations.





Originelle

NWAC Boutique – Originelle

The NWAC boutique, Originelle, is a store specializing in art, gifts, and accessories from both emerging and established Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and non-binary designers and will feature products from local, national and international artisans.

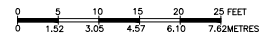
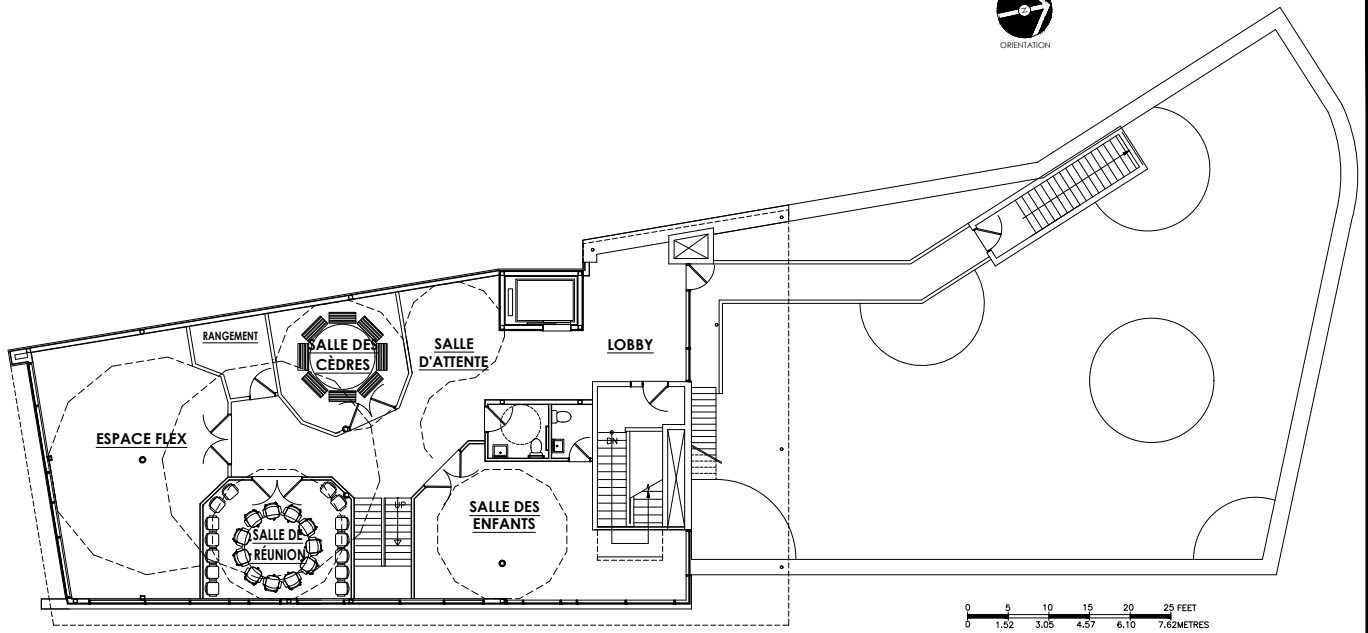


Café Bouleau

NWAC Café – Café Bouleau

The NWAC Café, Café Bouleau, will offer a unique modern menu designed by Indigenous chefs. Café Bouleau itself will incorporate Indigenous design elements, environmentally friendly construction materials, and a focus on energy efficiency. An Ad Hoc Advisory Committee consisting of Indigenous Knowledge Keepers and Elders are advising the architects and interior designers to ensure an infusion of Indigenous culture and teachings throughout the space. NWAC is working with an Elder, an Indigenous chef, and an Indigenous graphic design and branding firm to develop Café Bouleau's concept and branding.

NWAC's revenue producing activities will further contribute to financial stability, with all revenues supporting NWAC's non-profit operations, advocacy and programs. This flexible funding will help create a more stable work environment, and will support consistent access to programs and services for Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender-diverse people.



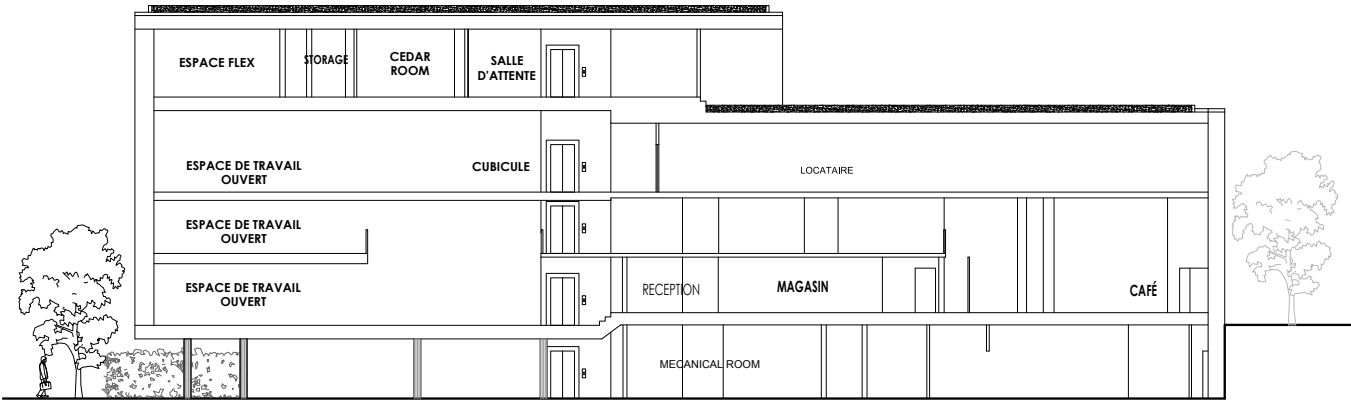
PLAN 4ÈME ÉTAGE
ÉCH: 1/125

NO. DATE	DESCRIPTION	ASS.
01 20180420	DESSINS PRÉLIMINAIRES	P.T.
02 20180716	C.C.U.	P.T.

Pierre J. Tabet architecte
167 De Roxbroune Gatineau, Qc. J8T 7Y6
Tel: 819-558-3994 / Cell: 813-797-5270 / Fax: 819-246-4312
Courriel : pierre.tabet@architecte@gmail.com



L'ASSOCIATION DES FEMMES AUTOCHTONES DU CANADA 120 PROMENADE DU PORTAGE, GATINEAU QC	
Titre	Échelle 1/125
PLAN DU 4È ÉTAGE	
Cat: 20180716	Dessiné: P.T., E.B.
Revisé: 0	Vérifié: P.Tabet
Dessin No.	A-340



SECTION TRANSVERSALE
ÉCH: 1/150

NO. DATE	DESCRIPTION	ASS.
01 20180420	DESSINS PRÉLIMINAIRES	P.T.
02 20180716	C.C.U.	P.T.

Pierre J. Tabet architecte
167 De Roxbroune Gatineau, Qc. J8T 7Y6
Tel: 819-558-3994 / Cell: 813-797-5270 / Fax: 819-246-4312
Courriel : pierre.tabet@architecte@gmail.com



L'ASSOCIATION DES FEMMES AUTOCHTONES DU CANADA 120 PROMENADE DU PORTAGE, GATINEAU QC	
Titre	Échelle 1/150
SECTION TRANSVERSALE	
Cat: 20180716	Dessiné: P.T., E.B.
Revisé: 0	Vérifié: P.Tabet
Dessin No.	A-400



DEPARTMENT REPORTS



SPECIAL PROJECTS

A Message from the Director of Projects

As Director of Projects, my team and I work directly with Indigenous communities, traveling for workshops and community engagement, hearing directly from Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender-diverse people. I love that I get the opportunity to meet such extraordinary people and hear first-hand, the responses to our resources are some of my favourite parts of my job.

Drawing on my background in teaching and working in the north, combined with the experience of my fantastic projects team, and the lessons learned from NWAC's past initiatives, we are able to develop many resources and toolkits. We aim to develop creative and interactive toolkits and resources, catering to needs of diverse people, including resources specific for children and youth.

I feel incredible lucky to work with such a talented and dedicated team, who go above and beyond to meet the needs of Indigenous communities. We will continue working to bring communities culturally relevant, gender-based resources in the year to come, and are excited by the prospect of scaling up our existing workshops to even more communities.

- Danielle Lepine, Director of Special Projects

Project Summaries



AWBEN

The Aboriginal Women Business and Entrepreneurship Network (AWBEN) project is in its sixth year of operations and continues to engage Indigenous women and support established and aspiring entrepreneurs from across the country. The AWBEN Conference is the signature event of the AWBEN project and this year marked the fifth annual event held in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

This year, the event brought women from across Canada together to support and learn from one another over a two and a half day period. Topics discussed at this year's conference included social media, funding, and creating a business pitch.

Participants also had the opportunity to hear stories from other female Indigenous entrepreneurs and ask questions about their journeys. For instance, the hosts of The Four, Wendy Whitebear, Bevann Fox, Melissa Obey and Samantha Racette, came together to share and discuss their real-life experiences as successful business women. These panelists were able to share their personal experiences with participants while offering advice and answering questions.

Important advice included not rushing your business plan or launch, taking care of yourself, staying true to yourself and keeping your culture close to your heart. At the same time, they spoke about the importance of not being defined as just an Indigenous entrepreneur, but rather be seen as entrepreneurs first.



NWAC is devoted to promoting a healthy lifestyle while supporting female Indigenous entrepreneurs. In order to emphasize this, a self-care workshop was offered at AWBEN. This session aided women by expressing the importance of taking care of yourself. Starting a business is hard work and time-consuming. It is often easy to become overworked and overwhelmed.

This workshop stressed that your business cannot have long-term success if you cannot take care of yourself first. It is very difficult for women to take time for themselves, but they need to. It is also important to be mindful of what we put into our minds, by watching or reading negative publications women can internalize this negativity. Women need to practice self-compassion since it affects your self-worth. Self-worth is not the same as a person's external worth. Entrepreneurs need to keep this in mind as they develop their business.

Some suggestions from this session were to eat properly, exercise (take walks, do yoga, find exercise videos on YouTube) schedule time for yourself, rest when you become sick and take time for your family. This workshop stressed that a person cannot create great work if their brain is exhausted, so it is very important for entrepreneurs to get proper rest.

Additionally, the AWBEN conference was an outlet for local Indigenous artists and vendors to show their products and network with other entrepreneurs.

Moving forward, NWAC's goal is to continue AWBEN as an annual event as it has for the past five years. This conference has developed into an important resource for Indigenous female entrepreneurs. The Indigenous women who participate in this conference receive tools to help their businesses become successful. They also form long-term networking relationships with other entrepreneurs in their area and across the country.

In addition, NWAC has improved the AWBEN website for ongoing resources and support to entrepreneurs. The website includes the Aboriginal Entrepreneurship Toolkit developed by NWAC covering topics such as business models, marketing and financing your business. NWAC will also be promoting female Indigenous entrepreneurs in its store, both online and at the new physical location in Hull, Québec. The store, Originelle, will be selling artisanal items made by Indigenous women. In this way, NWAC will continue to support Indigenous entrepreneurs and create a market for their goods, furthering their success and NWAC's outreach promoting economic prosperity and security through self-employment.

Although NWAC focuses on the lives of Indigenous women & children, we recognize that the financial wellness of all Indigenous peoples is essential to achieving an independent & healthy life.



Financial Health & Wealth

An Initiative by The Native Women's Association of Canada

9:00 AM - 4 Aug 2018

2 Retweets 3 Likes



Financial Health & Wealth

Financial Health and Wealth

The 2018 Financial Health and Wealth training program is the third installment of NWAC's goal to provide Indigenous women with financial training. This project focused on four main deliverables: reviewing resources from previous years, developing a toolkit, delivering two pilot presentations, and recording the success of the project in a final report.

A key aspect of this project was rebranding from Financial Literacy to Financial Health and Wealth. The title, Financial Literacy, could imply those who attended the course were in some way illiterate; changing to the title Financial Health and Wealth evokes a more positive message and image for the project.

As part of the rebranding, NWAC commissioned a new project logo for all Financial Health and Wealth materials. This new logo evokes an image of growth and well-being, which corresponds to the overall project objectives. NWAC hopes all Indigenous peoples who attend this training become more financially healthy and grow their knowledge in order to become more financially independent.

The Financial Health and Wealth toolkit was developed to start with the basics of financial health then proceed to matters that are more complex. Throughout the toolkit, NWAC recommends participants contact experts as needed. As NWAC is not a Financial Advisor, NWAC staff cannot offer advice on specific situations such as investing; however, NWAC can offer general knowledge and recommendations while directing people to proper resources.

Financial topics have very subject-specific vocabulary. In order to help participants during the training, and in the future, the first section of the toolkit is a detailed vocabulary list. This provides plain language explanations to terms that may be new, complex or misleading to the participant.

The second section of this toolkit discusses how to become financially independent. This toolkit works to improve participants' knowledge and confidence to alleviate dependence on others. Becoming knowledgeable about finances, while gaining confidence, in order to become financially independent enables women to take care of themselves and their families. Despite changing circumstances, this toolkit provides Indigenous women with the skills to adapt with flexible approaches and solutions to challenges that may arise.

The other topics covered in the toolkit include choosing a bank account, life, house and car insurance, budgeting, planning, saving, credit scores, loans, and taxes.

This toolkit progresses to allow topics to build off one another streaming in a logical manner. Participants receive the basics of financial independence then expand their knowledge as the toolkit advances ensuring maximum comprehension.

Making the materials as accessible as possible to a variety of age groups and educational levels was a priority for this project. To this end, the language used was purposefully at an upper elementary school level and the subject matter did not assume any prior knowledge for participants. This ensured a broad range of participants could meaningfully engage, understanding the content and improving the success and outcomes of the training.

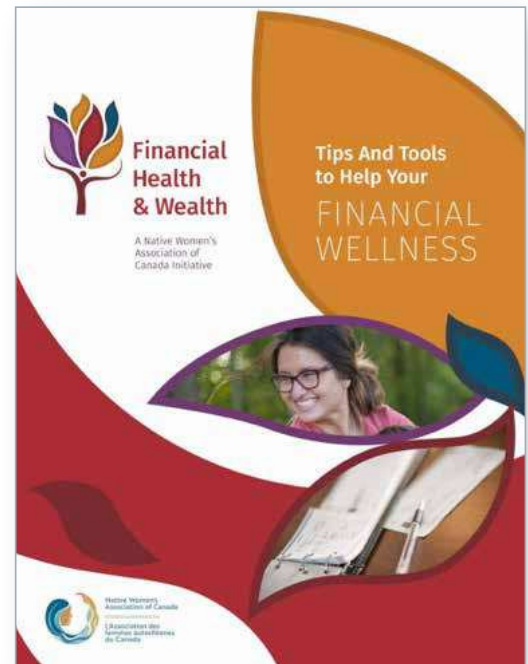
The final toolkit compiled the material into a book including multiple copies of forms, lists, and tables. This way the participants would be able to complete the budgeting exercises during the training and have extra copies to use in the future, making this book reusable and extending the benefits of the training forward. Additionally, a file folder was included in the toolkit. Each participant would be able to use the folder to store important financial documentation and receipts for expenditure tracking helping to develop healthy and organized habits.

This course used a classroom style meaning groups were purposefully small to allow for discussions and questions with only one facilitator. Smaller groups with one presenter allowed the organizer to connect with the audience keeping everyone engaged and ensuring the teacher could address all questions.

NWAC conducted two pilot sessions of Financial Health and Wealth, one in Wakefield, Québec and the second in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Both sessions proved to be incredibly successful. Based on the feedback forms the majority of participants enjoyed the training and felt more financially prepared after taking the training than they did prior to the training. All of the participants would recommend this training to others and one participant has already started recommending the training to others.

Many of the participants suggested this course should be available to high school students, the younger generation and directly to reserves across Canada. Many participants also commented this course was an eye-opening experience giving them an opportunity to focus on their finances for an extended period.

At this time, NWAC is adjusting the training to become a one-day event delivered in the new workshop rooms NWAC's new building. Additionally, NWAC is creating a smaller booklet of only tools and questions as a guide for financial independence.





You Are Not Alone

The You Are Not Alone toolkit was developed by NWAC to support Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people to live free from violence. In this, “train-the-trainer” workshop, participants came from all over Canada to share and learn about domestic violence and methods to assist women, girls and gender-diverse people fleeing violent situations.

The pilot training session included 21 participants all from different organizations across eight provinces and all three territories. Every agency present at the training session served 20% - 100% Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people as clients.

Participant selection ensured representation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, as well as agencies from rural and urban settings. Additionally, the participants in training came from a wide diversity of experiences including working in shelters, healing lodges and transition homes.

The participants in the workshop greatly appreciated the diversity as it created a learning opportunity for them to learn from one another including planning and constructing workshops together to meet the specific needs of each client.

This year, NWAC took suggestions from the previous years and incorporated them into the new You Are Not Alone

project material such as more background information on Indigenous history and culture. This can be useful to those who work with Indigenous people who need more context. NWAC also made the toolkit inclusive of all genders by adopting gender-neutral language.

The toolkit includes four workshops with a variety of activities under each workshop theme. The workshops are:

1. What is Domestic Violence
2. Are You in an Abusive Relationship
3. Planning to Leave
4. After you Leave

These activities have a flexible delivery for either group settings or via a one-on-one with clients.



The training included the following material:

- ❖ **You Are Not Alone Handbook:** This booklet is intended for Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people who are escaping domestic violence. Individuals can complete four main workshops with a You Are Not Alone facilitator.
- ❖ **You Are Not Alone Resource Guide:** This booklet lists shelters, transition homes, and supporting agencies women, girls and gender-diverse people who are experiencing domestic violence can access during and after a crisis.
- ❖ **Community Safety Plan Booklet:** This booklet will keep important information that is necessary for people escaping violence, such as safe places to go and important contact information. The booklet can be a safety concern, so NWAC advises to keep it safely hidden.
- ❖ **You Are Not Alone Supports Bookmark:** This bookmark can be used during workshops and it lists a variety of crisis support organizations' contact information.
- ❖ **You Are Not Alone Facilitator's Guide:** The guide includes general information about Indigenous people and their history. The guide includes worksheets for facilitating workshops, including culturally appropriate ways to structure workshops.
- ❖ **You Are Not Alone Facilitator Training Videos:** The training videos are additional resources facilitators can use. The videos include tips on how to be a successful facilitator. The videos also go through each workshop to illustrate what a group workshop would look like.
- ❖ **PowerPoint Presentation:** The PowerPoint presentation used for the Train-the-Trainer workshop in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

Overall, participants expressed they valued the worksheets provided in the material and said they would definitely use these with their clients. The gender inclusiveness in the material and the gender-neutral language was well received, as was the diversity in representation in participants. Many Indigenous women were able to share their stories and the non-Indigenous women learned a lot about the added barriers and issues that affect Indigenous women.

The You Are Not Alone training provided the opportunity to not only learn the material to aid Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people fleeing violence, but also the opportunity to learn how others would present their workshops. Participants agreed to hold workshops in their shelters and communities, which are across Canada. If additional funding is available, there are various recommendations from the participants to enhance the existing toolkit and further the outreach and success of this initiative.



Indigenous women, girls & gender-diverse people deserve to be heard & have a right to live and be safe. If you need somebody to speak with, please remember that You Are Not Alone. Call the number below and speak to somebody today.

Talk 4 Healing (EN/FR) is a helpline that provides culturally sensitive counselling, advice and support to Indigenous Women. Services available in Ojibway, Oji-Cree and Cree

1-855-554-4325 24/7 or online at www.talk4healing.com

First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line (EN/FR) provides culturally grounded assessment, referrals, support in times of crisis, and suicide intervention. Services available in Ojibway, Cree and Inuktitut.

1-855-242-3310 24/7

Kid's Help Phone (EN/FR) provides anonymous and non-judgemental support to youth and teens.

1-800-668-6868 24/7 or online at www.kidshelpline.ca

Youth Services Bureau (EN/FR) provides counselling and crisis line for youth and the LGBTQ community in Ottawa and Eastern Ontario; will also make referrals in other cities.

1-877-377-7775 24/7 or online at www.ysbchat.ysb.ca

Thurs to Sun 4pm - 10pm EST

Trans-Lifeline (EN) provides support, information and resources to transgender or questioning people, as well as to their families and friends.

1-877-330-6366 24/7

24 Hour Sexual Assault Line (EN) provides services for women that experience or witness sexual assault.

1-604-876-2622 24/7

Canadian Association of Suicide Prevention provides educational materials and resources. Links to suicide prevention and intervention lines across Canada.

www.suicideprevention.ca

SOS Violence Conjugale (FR) provides confidential assessment, support, information and referral services.

1-800-363-9010 24/7

MMIW Crisis Line (EN/FR) provides support to family, friends and community members who are being impacted by the loss of a missing or murdered Indigenous woman, girl or Two-spirit person.

1-844-413-6649 24/7

Assaulted Women's Helpline (Multiple Languages) provides support, information and referrals for women who have experienced any form of abuse.

1-866-863-0511 24/7

7:00 AM - 11 Aug 2018

5 Retweets 12 Likes



Honouring Indigenous Women Girls and Gender-Diverse People

The Honouring Indigenous Women, Girls and Gender-Diverse People project focused on creating educational material that is trauma-informed, and strength-based to help foster resiliency in Indigenous youth. This material aims to promote reconciliation with the Canadian government by means of acknowledging and respecting the cultural traditions of Indigenous people, as well as acknowledging all of the innovations and strengths of Indigenous people. Additionally, this project was created, in part, to acknowledge the missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people. The honouring project consisted of creating a booklet that would fit the curriculum of schools Canada wide. This booklet aims to build resiliency and help establish reconciliation through strength-based and trauma-informed activities. Reconciliation can develop under programs by empowering and acknowledging Indigenous people for who they are. In addition, respecting their rich cultures, beliefs, traditions, and innovative contributions further contributes to the reconciliation narrative. Activities in the toolkit include:

- ❖ **Defining What Respect and Honour Look Like to You:** This activity utilizes the talking stick tradition, allowing everyone to speak and be heard respectfully.
- ❖ **Mindfulness Activity:** This activity aims to help those that are struggling to be in the moment, and see themselves clearly.
- ❖ **Empowerment Word Search Activity:** This activity is a fun activity for youth to complete at the halfway point of the workshop.
- ❖ **Affirmation Activity:** I am, I can and I will: The Affirmation Activity aims to help youth see the strengths, and find ways to be who they truly want to be.

Additional components included:

- ◆ Strength and Diversity of Indigenous People
- ◆ Traditional Roles of Women
- ◆ Cleaning the Lens
- ◆ Wolf Cub Story
- ◆ Valuing Yourself
- ◆ Sustainability in Culture
- ◆ Traditional Teachings
- ◆ Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ in Indigenous Culture
- ◆ Indigenous Innovations
- ◆ Brief Introduction to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
- ◆ Moving Forward
- ◆ Final and Main Activity – Making your own



Faceless Dolls

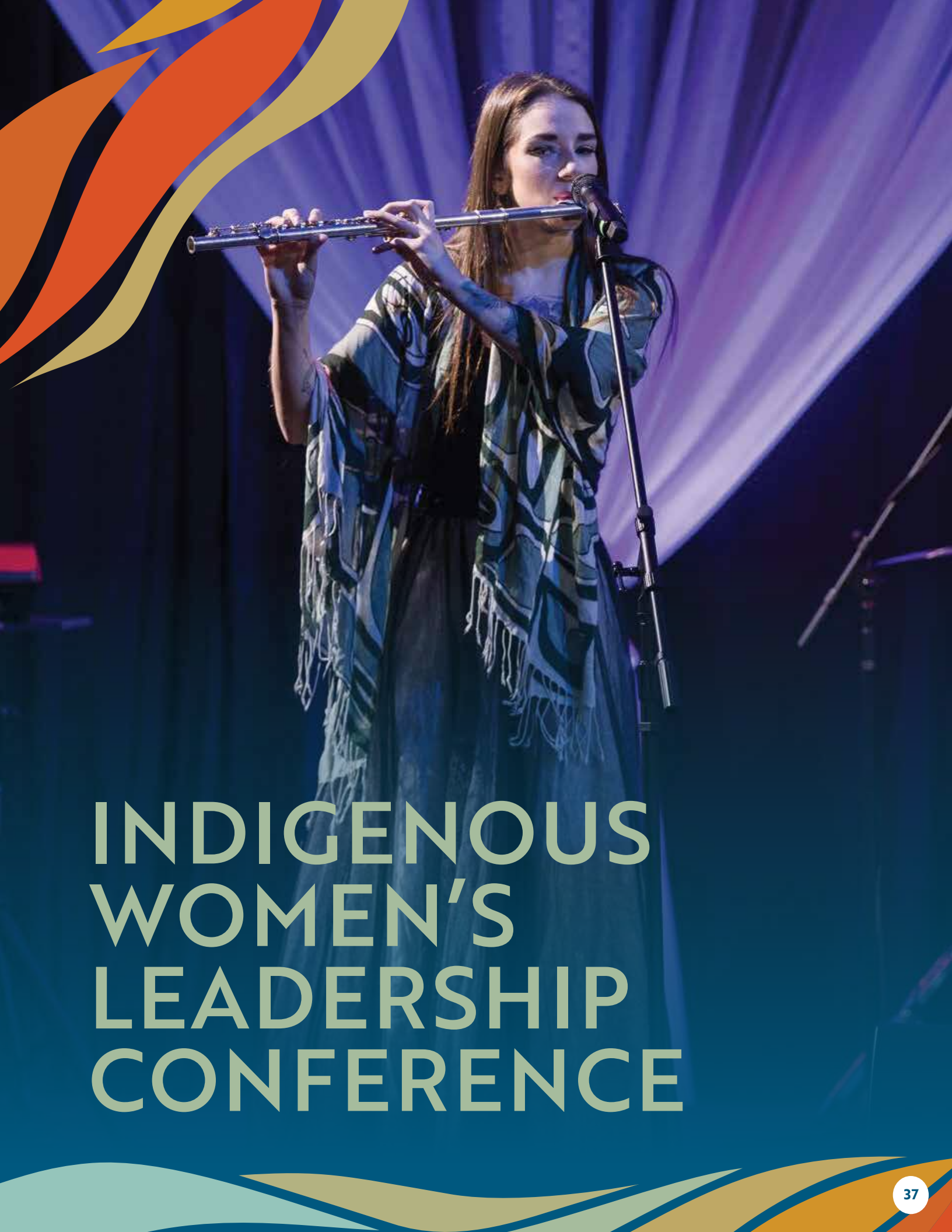
NWAC packaged the entire project in bags designed with a new logo featuring an image of the Faceless Dolls for workshop participants. Each bag included all the required material to create your own Faceless Doll to honour the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. This included templates, felt, a variety of culturally inclusive and appropriate accessories, including Métis sashes, feathers, and fur boots, and other necessary tools.

NWAC conducted a pilot training session with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth from Maniwaki Woodlands school with the secondary 1 (grade 7) English and art class. NWAC ensured the classroom represented gender equally for the project. The participants really enjoyed the workshop, and they were all receptive to the teachings. The delivery of the materials fostered understanding and participation by both girls and boys. The project was extremely well received during the initial pilot, and teachers commented on how well the material taught advanced concepts in an easy to understand layout. In the school where NWAC piloted the project, teachers reserved a space in the hallway to place the Faceless Dolls students created, as well as important information regarding missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

The school wanted NWAC to come back and do the project with more classes, and eventually the entire school. NWAC was also contacted by the Windfield school in North York (Toronto District School Board) and was asked to facilitate a Faceless Dolls project with a girls' leadership group.

Given all the positive feedback while running the pilot, the project was a huge success. The significance of this project and the teachings it delivers is vitally important to fostering resiliency in youth and bringing attention to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in a very respectful way.

NWAC is hoping to deliver more workshops to further the teachings and expand the Honouring Indigenous Women, Girls and Gender-Diverse People project, especially create more Faceless Dolls, to foster resiliency in youth and continue the path to reconciliation.



INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE



In November 2017 Indigenous women, community members, and stakeholders gathered at Ottawa's Infinity Centre on the unceded traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation, to attend The Indigenous Women's Leadership Conference. Hosted by the Native Women's Association of Canada in partnership with Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, the 2-day event showcased and celebrated the leadership and entrepreneurial achievement of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women from across the Nation.

The opening evening's Cultural Exchange immersed guests in Indigenous culture, showcasing food, music, and fashion, as attendees got acquainted while sampling from the assortment of Indigenous inspired appetizers. Indigenous women proudly dressed in traditional regalia were among the crowd, joined by Indigenous women delegates from Mexico, who attended garbed in their own traditional dress. Participants were invited into the main hall, where Elder Mae Louise Campbell offered a blessing for the evening's feast. As guests began their meals, the entertainment kicked off with the Indigenous Women's Fashion Show, coordinated by youth-led Indigenous community organization Unlty Entertainment. Indigenous models sported handmade jewelry by Kelly Nahwegahbow, who contributed jewelry to accent each designer's apparel. Models began their circuit at the front of the stage, before beginning a tour of the room effectively ensuring a fantastic view for all. The evening continued with a lineup of extraordinary musicians and dancers.

The conference featured a series of panels highlighting Indigenous women leaders. Simultaneous translation services were available in both French and Inuktitut. Emcee Jessica Dumas welcomed guests, opening the day with an acknowledgement of the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation, before then acknowledging the Ministers in attendance, and the international delegates from Mexico, Peru, Bolivia, Columbia, Guatemala, USA, and Australia, as well as the Indigenous women trailblazers from all across Canada. Elder Susan Avingaq performed an opening prayer in Inuktitut and lit the ceremonial Qulliq. Elder Roseanne Martin came forward representing Listuguj First Nation and offered an opening prayer in her traditional language, before explaining that she had offered the Seven Directional Prayer taught to her many years ago. Finally, Elder Jo MacQuarrie, Métis of Cree and French heritage who works with the Métis Nation of Ontario, offered a third opening prayer, thanking the Creator, the Spirits of their ancestors for being with them today, as well as thanking the Algonquin Nation for their hospitality while meeting on their land. She then shared the Mi'kmaq Honour Song, singing in time with her drum.

After welcoming remarks from NWAC Executive Director Lynne Groulx, Rebecca Kudloo, President of Pauktutit Inuit Women of Canada, and Melanie Omeniho, President of Women of the Métis Nation, NWAC President Francyne Joe expressed gratitude of the opportunity as NWAC President to meet so many Indigenous women across Canada.

The Honourable Minister Carolyn Bennett extended greetings to the delegates from Mexico, who would be attending the Tri-Lateral Meetings between the United States, Canada, and Mexico on Violence against Indigenous Women, and the Honourable Minister Maryam Monsef expressed hope that the Indigenous women present would tell their stories to uplift and inspire.

Panels were moderated by Cheryl McKenzie, a Canadian broadcast journalist, host, and producer of Anishinabek and Cree descent best known as the host of the Aboriginal People's Television Network's half-hour nightly news show APTN National News, and the talk show InFocus.

Overall, the Indigenous Women's Leadership Conference was a huge success highlighting the leadership and entrepreneurial achievement of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women from across the Nation.





BUSINESS, EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT





A Message From the Director of Business, Employment and Social Development

We are pleased to introduce our new Director of Business, Employment and Social Development. Andrea Aiabens is Ojibway from Wiikwemkoong First Nation on Manitoulin Island. She has a Bachelor of Science degree from Carleton University with a major in Biology and minor in Psychology and worked for a National Indigenous Organization for 4 years prior to joining the NWAC team in September 2012.

Andrea has worked on various projects in the Labour Market Development Unit (now Business, Employment and Social Development) including Financial Literacy, Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS), and Business & Entrepreneurship Skills Training (BEST). Given her past experience at NWAC and corporate knowledge, she is excited for this new opportunity and will hit the ground running.

NWAC holds a vision for program and policy that reflects the needs of Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, gender-diverse people, and their families. This vision includes opportunities for women in the labour market, including opportunities for training and employment in order to reach financial security and overall well-being.

Through programming and policy NWAC's Business, Employment, and Social Development Unit strives to improve the lives and well-being of Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people. NWAC works with public and private industry on recruitment and retention, with priority placed on meaningful partnership development and projects that engage in skills development and training.

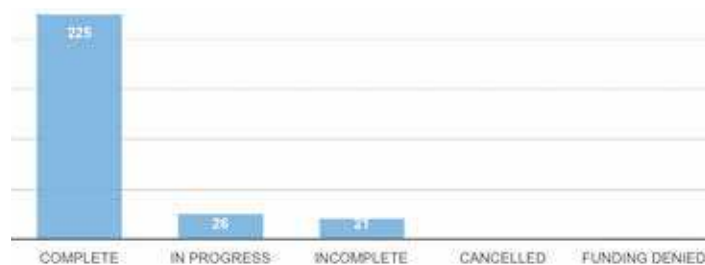
- Andrea Aiabens, Director of BESD

Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS)

Funded by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), and the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS), NWAC's ASETS program is an integrated approach to Indigenous labour market programming. ASETS links training to labour market demand and ensures Indigenous women Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people can fully participate in economic opportunities. NWAC is a national ASETS agreement holder and is committed to enhancing and strengthening the economic reality for Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people across Canada. The NWAC ASETS program is delivered throughout Canada in partnership with the Provincial Territorial Membership Associations (PTMAs) who provide the program at the regional level. ASETS Coordinators are available in the regions to provide direct client services, while NWAC provides the support to the regions through the overall coordination and administration of ASETS nationally.

NWAC has been an ASETS agreement holder for several years and has recently restructured the program to better serve Indigenous communities. The initial phase of program restructuring resulted in recruitment of two new Regional Indigenous Skills and Employment Coordinators (RISE Coordinators). The RISE Coordinators are responsible for designated regions (North-West and South-East), and allow NWAC to enhance in-person site visits.

Much of the ASETS Coordinator's work involves individual training purchases and targeted wage subsidy interventions. ASETS Coordinators also offer career counselling, skills training and enhancement, job search supports, and assistance with employment maintenance. ASETS success is measured by employment outcome results and the results for 2017-18 fiscal year can be seen below.





The AWBEN network has made a meaningful difference in the lives of Indigenous women across Canada. One client of the BCNWA ASETS coordinator has successfully completed her Bachelor of Education at Thompson Rivers University (TRU) and is now working as a teacher on call.

"I would not have been able to complete my degree without the BC Native Women's Association assistance. I hope to pursue my Masters of Education in the near future. Once again, thank you BCNWA for all of the help you provided me in my final year of my Bachelor of Education!"

NWAC will continue to move forward with program re-structuring and enhancements to further ensure we can support the PTMAs and help place them in the best position to deliver ASETS programming in a manner that allows PTMAs to reach more clients and better meet their needs.

Aboriginal Business & Entrepreneurship Skills Training (BEST)

In partnership with the Canadian Centre for Aboriginal Entrepreneurship (CCAIE), NWAC is delivering a culturally relevant, gender-based skills development and training program to underemployed and unemployed Indigenous women across Canada. The Aboriginal Business & Entrepreneurship Skills Training program (Aboriginal BEST) is free training designed to support Indigenous entrepreneurship, and includes training on building a business plan, marketing, financing, and operations.

The Aboriginal BEST program has a formal curriculum and offers supports and tools to help nurture the entrepreneurial spirit of people, communities, and organizations. Participants meet guest speakers, identify viable business ideas, determine the feasibility of business ideas, and take steps to start or grow financing options on their journey to successful self-employment. This initiative includes business coaching and ongoing mentoring for up to 6 months following completion of the Aboriginal BEST for women program and is intended for First Nations, Métis and Inuit, regardless of status, who are interested in becoming self-employed or starting their own business. BEST benefits Indigenous women and gender-diverse people in all stages of business development who want to turn their dreams into reality.

NWAC's Aboriginal BEST for women program went beyond the existing CCAIE program by following a Train-the-Trainer approach. Trainers were selected by an advisory committee, who reviewed over 80 applications and selected 20 applicants to take BEST Train-the-Trainer in Toronto on February 26 – March 2, 2018.

The Indigenous women who completed the program were certified to deliver the BEST curriculum and each are responsible for delivering one, ten-day Aboriginal BEST training session in their own or surrounding communities by January 31, 2019. There are profiles of the BEST trainers now featured on the NWAC website.

Attendees of the Train-the-Trainer session were very pleased with their experiences, which helped them gain both skills and confidence in their own abilities.

"I would like to thank the Native Women's Association of Canada for selecting me for BEST Train-the-Trainer in Toronto. I found the experience of training with the other 19 women to be an amazing experience. I have the utmost gratitude at the conclusion of my Victoria BEST Program for the support of NWAC, and in particular Andrea Aiabens for her continual support and timely responses to questions and requests. I learned that I am a good teacher and that I can manage a diverse class. Thank you, nea:wen, hych-ka, meegwetch for this priceless opportunity."



Trainers have already begun hosting BEST training sessions in their own communities. As of June 30, 2018 – 7 training sessions are complete, 3 are in-progress and 8 are tentatively scheduled for summer/fall 2018. NWAC has already received final reports from three training sessions, with 33 participants having received the BEST Training through those sessions.

Three training sessions were held in Victoria, BC, Saskatoon, SK, and Fort Nelson, BC. Each session features diverse and creative business ideas in an array of fields including a food truck with a menu centered around bannock, development of Indigenous language revitalization programs for First Nations Communities, a micro-blading business, dance classes, and a mobile welding truck.

The rest of the sessions will be held with the continued support of the BEST Project Coordinator, and the BEST trainers will still be certified to deliver BEST training past the end of the project.

Communities at Risk (CAR)

Communities at Risk (CAR) was a pilot project developed by NWAC and funded by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) from November 2016 to March 31, 2018. A cultural community integration program, CAR provided wrap-around essential life skills training to Indigenous women, helping them overcome barriers to employment and training.

The program was delivered through part The Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto (NWRCT) and Manitoba Moon Voices Inc. (MMVI). Each location delivered two six-month training programs consisting of five months of course delivery including two weeks dedicated to start-up/intake and two weeks dedicated to wind-down.

In partnership with NWRCT and MMVI, NWAC identified an urgent need for culturally relevant gender-based skills development and training for underemployed and unemployed Indigenous women living in situations considered high risk. The women who participated in the CAR program were identified as those experiencing additional barriers to accessing employment or training due to the situations in which they found themselves living. The program applied a formal curriculum and offered supports and tools to access the additional supports they would need past the life of the program.

53 Indigenous women completed the program, reporting benefits including:

- ◆ Increased awareness of employment and training resources, programs, and sources of funding;
- ◆ Increased understanding of how to navigate the labour market;
- ◆ Increased understanding of government programs, such as Employment Insurance, Disability, and Social Assistance;
- ◆ Improved employability, with many of the women able to secure employment through reference letters provided to them by the CAR Project Coordinator;
- ◆ Improved access to support services for childcare and housing; and
- ◆ Improved knowledge of programs delivered by Indigenous organizations.

The program has benefitted its graduates in ways beyond socio-economic well-being. On their intake surveys at the beginning of the semester, 20% of the women stated they were struggling with addiction. Upon graduation, all those who experienced addiction indicated they had remained sober for the duration of the program. Additionally, one participant was able to secure custody of her child due to CAR resources and referrals.

A full-time Elder/Spiritual Healer worked at both locations to provide much needed support for



participants who may experience vicarious trauma during class as a result of the sharing of lived experiences related to learning materials involving class elements like poverty, handling trauma and grief, intergenerational trauma, addictions, etc. The Elders provided participants with support and guidance not only through these times, but also throughout the whole program. The Elders also offered their teachings and traditional knowledge as requested by individual participants.

Graduates from courses delivered in both locations found their shared experience to be so beneficial that variations of alumni groups were formed so they could continue to provide ongoing support to one another.

Women Building Futures

In 2017-18, NWAC undertook a pilot project with Women Building Futures (WBF), an Edmonton-based social purpose organization and training institution. The project was designed to address a lack of accessible training programs for careers in the trades for Indigenous women in the Edmonton and surrounding area. NWAC coordinated and monitored the project's progress, as WBF delivered its programs and services specifically to Indigenous women.

In total, the project provided four service streams to Indigenous women clients and potential clients of WBF, individual learning plans, foundational/readiness courses, childcare support, and transportation support, and a National Awareness Campaign implemented in two phases.

Nearly four hundred Indigenous women developed individual learning plans, created face-to-face with a Career Navigator. These personalized learning plans accounted for individual needs and goals and selected relevant courses and supports from WBF's curriculum. Available courses included the WBF Work Proud Initiative, which was completed and became available during NWAC's partnership with WBF. Work Proud comprises two readiness courses – one equipping women with knowledge of their rights and facts about what they need to be prepared for their first day on-site, and one equipping industry employers with knowledge of what they need to consider to create safe environments for women on their sites.

More than twenty Indigenous women also received WBF's existing suite of foundational and readiness courses, including numeracy and essential skills. Indigenous women enrolled in programs who needed to relocate, or who faced transportation barriers were able to access a driver's license training program at no cost to them. Indigenous women enrolled in programs who required childcare services were able to access childcare funding supports to allow them to attend. Additionally, over 1000 Indigenous women accessed Labour Market Information sessions in Edmonton as well in surrounding communities and on reserves.

In addition to the direct service provision, the WBF national awareness campaign, titled *You Got This*, hit the airwaves October 30, 2017–November 19, 2017. A second sprint of the campaign ran January 15, 2018–February 4, 2018. The campaign goals were: empowering women, changing perceptions, and reducing barriers to careers in the trades. The main actor in this national campaign was a strong, inspirational Indigenous woman who went through one of WBF's programs and personally experienced a change in her life as a result of employment in the trades.

You Got This aired on television (CTV, CBC, Global, HGTV, W Network, APTN, and during Hockey Night in Canada), radio throughout Alberta, was also seen online, on social media, as well as in Edmonton and Calgary movie theatres and grocery stores, and through Aboriginal Link – to name just a few places. Its main video component was complemented by #WBFRealTalk videos, continuing to engage women who want to contribute messages to the campaign.

Although the project is now completed, continuous support from their Career Navigator is available for these women beyond the duration of their training with WBF, whether or not they complete the training. NWAC looks forward to future opportunities for partnership with WBF and supports the work they are doing to empower Indigenous women in the Edmonton area, as well as their goals of expanding into other provinces to assist Indigenous women in achieving economic prosperity and well-being.





Strategic Partnerships

Over the past year, NWAC achieved significant growth in accordance to the organization's missions and visions. In this regard, NWAC is determined to improve relations on national and international levels further providing a platform for Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people across Canada to connect and broaden their network.

The organization is transforming its national and international networking relationships through the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA), funded by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC).

The SPA supports labour market programming for Indigenous women by:

- ◆ Identifying barriers and opportunities to Indigenous women's participation in the labour market;
- ◆ Actively seeking out partnerships through networking at tradeshows and conferences;
- ◆ Participating and developing engagement sessions to ensure the voice of Indigenous women are heard;
- ◆ Developing policy and/or position papers to advance Indigenous women's priorities, needs, and knowledge of the labour market; and,
- ◆ Creating and distributing the Labour Market Development (LMD) Information Bulletin.

In addition, NWAC is actively seeking out new partnership opportunities to increase Indigenous women's participation in the labour market and develop economic opportunities. The Strategic Partnerships Liaison is responsible for NWAC's SPA network by engaging with other organizations through trade shows, conferences and presentations.

NWAC's outreach has expanded to a broad collection of organizations across Canada, and through partnerships with other organizations, NWAC is increasing the circulation of labour market information linking Indigenous women with opportunities. This gives NWAC the opportunity to shed light on issues faced by Indigenous peoples in Canada while connecting and learning from other women's organizations around the world.

G7 & W7 – Gender Advisory Council Discussion Panel with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

The Department of Strategic Partnerships, through the Strategic Partnership Liaison, was able to obtain an invitation to the Gender Advisory Council Discussion Panel on Gender Equality in April 2018 at the Chateau Laurier Hotel in Ottawa, Canada.

The Gender Equality Advisory Council for Canada's G7 Presidency works to ensure gender equality and a gender-based analysis weave into all components of Canada's G7 Presidency and provide recommendations for the G7.

The discussion panel offered a unique opportunity to hear from prominent figures on gender equality and network. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made opening remarks followed by the panel discussion, which included:

- ◆ Ambassador Isabelle Hudon – Ambassador of Canada in France
- ◆ Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka – Executive Director of UN Women
- ◆ Melinda Gates – Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- ◆ Roberta Jamieson – Indspire Founder
- ◆ Leymah Gbowee – Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

Education remained at the forefront of discussions with all the panelists providing unique perspectives. The G7 as a collective must make sure prioritizing girls' education is not a one-time thing; but is instead foundational to their work and goals. This panel provided excellent recommendations to ensure conversations taking place include gender equality at their very core.

Leymah Gbowee, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011, emphasized the importance of using multiple lenses to appropriately address gender inequalities. Education for girls must be holistic since they are affected by additional barriers.

Cultural and gendered lenses are especially important in regards to Indigenous affairs. NWAC values the importance of education for our women, girls and gender-diverse people. Moving forward, NWAC will expand its educational services for Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people and continue to work on educational policy and including gender-based analysis for overall improvement of the institutions in place.

Following the panel NWAC's Strategic Partnership Liaison made critical connections with prominent figures resulting in follow-up meetings between the NWAC team and potential partners.

Recognition of the Native Women's Association of Canada's Work

One of the Strategic Partnership Liaison's goals this year is to ensure that NWAC has a seat at the table of important discussions concerning Indigenous women in Canada and at the international level. Another goal is to ensure the hard work of NWAC is recognized for its true value.

This year, the Strategic Partnership Liaison worked to expand NWAC's international recognition and access high-level spaces to share our work with the rest of Canada and the world. Thus far, we have been successfully invited to meet and exchange with potential important partners at the G7, W7 and with various Diplomatic Corps.

We will continue to work and push to ensure that we have a seat at the table, but also to set our own table and create more opportunities for NWAC and the women that we proudly represent.

Next Steps

Moving forward, Strategic Partnerships will focus on developing key partnerships with national and international organizations while increasing our President and Executive Director's participation in international Indigenous women's forums, symposiums and conferences. It will additionally work to increase our involvement in numerous international networks to strengthen our presence in decision-making bodies, develop beneficial partnerships and create a strong network of Indigenous women.



LEGAL ADVOCACY GROUP

Message from Legal Unit Team Lead

This has been an exciting year for the Legal Advocacy Group, particularly because this is the first year NWAC has ever had the Legal Advocacy Group! Our team is working hard to bring forward the positions and arguments on important issues facing Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people. We have worked with our Board and PTMAs as well as some of our external allies to represent NWAC with some of our allies before the Supreme Court of Canada twice this year. In one of these cases we achieved a declaration that Correctional Services Canada did not uphold their obligation to Indigenous prisoners. We know that one win is never enough, and that together we must keep fighting for the rights of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people.

Our Legal Advocacy Group presently consists of Virginia Lomax, the Unit Team Lead who primarily represents NWAC on the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and other cases relating to human rights violations against Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people; Adam Bond, who focuses on NWAC's work on the Descheneaux case, Bill S-3, discrimination under the Indian Act, and Environmental issues; and Elana Finestone, who focuses primarily on the criminalization of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people and corrections/prisons.

The Legal Advocacy Group has many important advocacy opportunities moving into our second year in operation, and we are excited and passionate about continuing to represent the best interests of NWAC.

- Virginia Lomax, Team Lead

The Legal Advocacy Group is a new unit within NWAC. Our team focuses jointly on external advocacy in the interests of NWAC and the Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people NWAC represents, as well as performing internal legal work for the organization's benefit. Some of the areas of law that the Legal Advocacy Group presently focuses on are human rights (Indigenous rights, women's rights, sex discrimination, Indian Act discrimination, etc.) legislative review, environmental law, prison law, international law, and public law.

The Legal Advocacy Group is developing a litigation strategy that will enable us to more effectively and efficiently engage in interventions and litigations on issues that are important to Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people. This strategy will outline issue selection as well as grassroots engagement in order to develop legal positions that accurately and effectively represent the interests of NWAC's diverse representational base.

Presently, there are three lawyers and one summer student in the Legal Advocacy Group. We will also be welcoming a paralegal student and a pro bono law student in the upcoming school year.

Ongoing Files

Below are some of the files the Legal Advocacy Group is currently engaged in:



NWAC REPORT CARD

May 2017 - March 2018

National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

LEGEND

GREEN - PASS

Commitment has been met.



YELLOW - ACTION REQUIRED

Commitment is incomplete or needs more attention.



RED - FAIL

No progress made on the commitment.



GREY - INSUFFICIENT INFORMATION

Cannot assess at this time.



1. The commission's overall responsibility to develop and adhere to timelines regarding the operational/administrative structure.

FAIL

Since the beginning of the National Inquiry, NWAC has been closely engaged in the process both as a party with standing and as a National Indigenous Organization. NWAC has also committed to holding the Inquiry accountable through regular Report Cards, of which we have issued three.

NWAC attended all possible community hearings during Part I of the Inquiry, which was the truth gathering segment for family members to share their loved ones' stories. NWAC attended these hearings to bear witness to families' truths and to observe the Inquiry's process in order to hold them accountable to families.

NWAC has attended all Part II and III hearings that have taken place. These hearings are expert hearings and institutional hearings that are designed to examine systemic and institutional causes of violence against Indigenous women and girls. NWAC has exercised its right to cross-examine expert and institutional witnesses at all of these hearings.

Moving forward, NWAC will continue to participate in any future hearings and will draft and submit written final submissions to the National Inquiry in order to inform the final report of the National Inquiry and the recommendations therein.



Forced Sterilization of Indigenous Women

NWAC was approached by an external lawyer who is filing a class-action lawsuit against doctors and health department in Saskatchewan for human rights abuses relating to the forced or coerced sterilization of Indigenous women. NWAC's Board of Directors unanimously approved NWAC's continued support for this legal action.

NWAC has submitted letters of support to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights thematic hearings in both Bogota, Colombia and San Juan, Dominican Republic in order to bring international attention to the human rights abuses faced by Indigenous women, primarily in Saskatchewan, but also in other provinces in Canada where Indigenous women have been forced or coerced into sterilization

by Canadian doctors. NWAC is also now expecting to participate in consultation with Health Canada and the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch in order to address this severe human rights abuse against Indigenous women and girls in Canada. NWAC supports the criminalization of forced and coerced sterilization of Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people.

NWAC is also working with partner Amnesty International and Action Canada in order to develop and implement a national awareness strategy to bring attention to these human rights abuses in Canada that target Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people.



Discrimination under the Indian Act

NWAC has successfully negotiated funding to undertake significant grassroots consultations and to host a national symposium on amendments to the Indian Act. NWAC's engagement activities will ensure that the Government's Collaborative Process will be informed specifically by the experiences and perspectives of Indigenous women. NWAC also sits on the Indigenous Advisory Panel advising the government of Canada on its Collaborative Process consultations and related documents.

Environment

Our Legal Unit has participated in negotiations at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to advance the interests of Indigenous women with respect to the effects of climate change. We delivered submissions to the subsidiary bodies and engaged in negotiations to encourage gender balance in the Indigenous Platform.

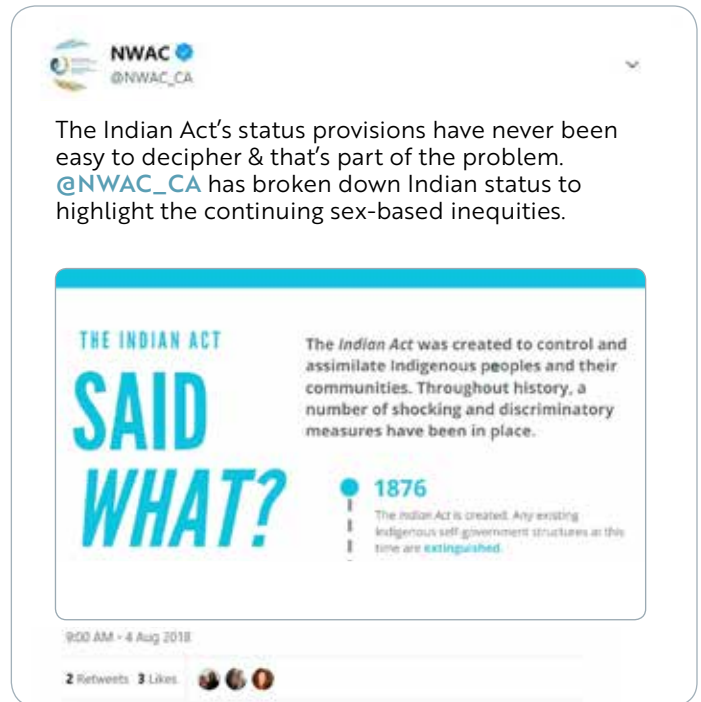
The Legal Unit also assessed the federal environmental assessment legislation, Bill C-69, and submitted a brief to the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development. Our submissions focused on the need for the legislation to conform with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) and, in particular, the rights of Indigenous women and children to freedom from all forms of violence and continued improvements to their socio-economic conditions.

UNDRIP

Finally, we have been working with NGO partners through the Coalition on the Human Rights of Indigenous peoples to advocate in support of the passage of Bill C-262, the UNDRIP Bill, through the House and Senate.

Federal Prisons

NWAC is applying to intervene at the British Columbia Court of Appeal in British Columbia Civil Liberties Association and The John Howard Society of Canada v Canada. Together with the feminist organization West Coast LEAF, NWAC will argue how the effects of intergenerational trauma from colonial practices shape their harmful experiences in segregation. The harm that Indigenous women experience in segregation should be accounted for when deciding whether segregation violates their rights under the law. NWAC is the only Indigenous organization requesting permission to intervene on how segregation laws affect Indigenous women prisoners.



Sex Trade

NWAC is engaging in legal research about how Bill C-36 regarding sex work affects Indigenous women in the sex trade. NWAC is looking at legal cases and finding key areas where Indigenous women are affected. The goal is to use the themes and research from these cases to guide grassroots consultations with Indigenous women with lived experience in the sex trade. By consulting with Indigenous women, NWAC will be in the best position to advocate for their needs in the legal arena.

Interventions

NWAC is constantly looking to participate in legal cases to advise a decision maker about how Indigenous women's experiences of colonialism and intergenerational trauma affect their ability to realize their legal rights.

NWAC's legal positions are informed by Indigenous women's perspectives and experiences. NWAC is building relationships with advocacy groups that work directly with and for Indigenous women and also relies on input from the grassroots Indigenous women who lead NWAC through the Board and the PTMAs. Examples include shelters for Indigenous women, federal prison advocacy groups, and woman and organizations of women with lived experience with HIV and other sexually transmitted blood-borne infections. NWAC is also building relationships with academics and government officials in order to engage in high-level discussions affecting Indigenous women's rights.



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



A Message from the Director of Health

Over the past year I have had the pleasure of watching our department grow, both as a team and in our capacity to work on advocating for health equity for Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people. Currently our department has five project staff, assigned to three different projects. While all of our staff are project based, meaning they are funded to work on very specific health areas, our team is comprised of passionate and dedicated individuals who are eager to take on more work outside of the scope of their projects. This means that NWAC's participation at various health conferences, roundtables, advisory committees, steering committees and working groups is continuously growing. Our participation ensures the voices of Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people are represented and their experiences are considered throughout the development of various health policies, frameworks and action plans at the Federal/Provincial/Territorial levels.

Our team is dedicated to taking a strength-based approach to all of the work that we do. This means that when we are developing health projects, resources, recommendations or policies, we focus on the strengths and resiliency of Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people, rather than focusing on the deficits. We are all very aware of the disproportionate burden of chronic and infectious diseases, the poor health outcomes and barriers to accessing health services experienced by Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people. However, what our team is equally aware of is all of the amazing work being done within communities, at the grassroots level. Consequently, our team is committed to focusing on these strength-based, community-led and community-driven health initiatives that are improving health access and outcomes for Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people. Our vision is to highlight these best practices, so other Indigenous communities can adapt and implement these interventions; to suit their community's needs and improve health outcomes.

Lastly, all of the work that we do is based on a trauma-informed approach and harm reduction principles. We are keenly aware of the impact colonialism has had on the health of Indigenous populations and that trauma from this history and ongoing colonial policies continue to be reinforced through racism and systemic discrimination within the healthcare and social service systems. Therefore, we need to work with health and social service providers, providing education to reduce this stigma and discrimination and risk of having Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people being "re-traumatized" while accessing services. Increasing access to culturally safe, trauma-informed and gender based health and social services alone will not improve health outcomes. Determinants of health extend far beyond access, lifestyle choices and health seeking choices. For that reason, we must continue to advocate for a social determinants of health approach for this population. We cannot expect that improved access to health care will improve health outcomes when Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people are struggling with poverty, housing insecurity, food insecurity, employment opportunities, a basic income and access to clean water, among many other determinants.

With all of this in mind, our team is very eager to expand our work, starting with maternal and infant health to the promotion of healthy aging, recognizing that early life experiences impact health outcomes later in life. Therefore, we would like to focus on early childhood interventions and prevention across the life course to promote health and wellness and to achieve health equity within this population!

- Chaneesa Ryan, Director of Health



Pathways PEKE (Partners for Engagement and Knowledge Exchange)

In partnership with the CIHR, Pathways PEKE aims to promote health equity among First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities. NWAC PEKE helps facilitate research partnerships between Indigenous communities, and CIHR funded health research teams across Turtle Island. Pathways PEKE recognizes that Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous ways of knowing are an essential aspect of developing the evidence base for how to design, offer, and implement programs and policies that promote health equity. Pathways PEKE focuses on practical interventions designed to improve the social determinants of health in four priority areas, which are oral health, tuberculosis, diabetes, and mental wellness.

The uniqueness of this initiative is that it is community-driven, and ongoing engagement between Indigenous communities, research teams, stakeholders, and PEKEs helps to ensure research outcomes can be translated into actionable and viable solutions fitting the needs of communities and creating real change and improvements to health outcomes.

NWAC PEKE is involved with approximately ten CIHR-funded research teams in various capacities, acting as a partner, knowledge user, or advisory committee member.

Health inequities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada are well documented. For Indigenous people, poor health is directly linked to the social determinants of health which include poverty, exposure to trauma and violence, employment/working environments, culture loss, education, precarious housing, etc. Due to the history of colonization in Canada, Indigenous people experience disproportionately poorer outcomes in these areas. The Pathways initiative acknowledges that to truly address these issues, research must be community-driven and researchers must listen and learn from Indigenous communities.

Indigenous women experience disproportionately poor health outcomes in the four priority areas of Pathways, and this initiative creates the opportunity for Indigenous women and gender-diverse people to directly participate in designing research that will create positive health outcomes for themselves and their communities.

Throughout the duration of the Pathways PEKE project, NWAC PEKE has provided ongoing support to communities and research teams by creating a receptive environment for knowledge exchange and ensuring research activities are culturally appropriate and community-driven. This has included working with research teams to facilitate community engagement sessions and learning circles. This has also involved providing training to research teams when appropriate. In March of 2018, NWAC PEKE provided Culturally-Relevant Gender-Based Analysis (CRGBA) training to “A SHARED Future” research team. This training provided them with an overview of NWAC’s approach to CRGBA, and how it can be applied in a policy or research context. This training also included group workshops where the team worked together to apply CRGBA to case studies relevant to the work they are doing.

NWAC PEKE worked with the Nishtam Niwipitan (My First Teeth) research team to facilitate a learning circle in Norway House Cree Nation. This learning circle presented research findings to the community in a culturally appropriate way and was well received. Prior to this, NWAC PEKE co-sponsored and participated in a learning circle in Haida Gwaii, BC. This learning circle was done in partnership with a Pathways research project on diabetes lead by Dr. Rhona Hanning. During this learning circle, the project team in Haida Gwaii shared the work that they have done within their communities through the project.

NWAC PEKE also supports research teams in an advisory capacity, and provides ongoing support and input into their projects through participation in teleconferences and team meetings where they share research findings and provide input on research team activities.



In September of 2017, NWAC PEKE co-hosted the third Pathways Annual Gathering in partnership with CIHR. This gathering took place in Whitehorse, YK at the Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre. Community members and researchers came together to discuss how we can address health inequities and barriers Indigenous communities face. The theme of the conference focused on gender inclusivity as a foundation for building healthy communities. Out of this gathering NWAC PEKE gained a greater understanding of the unique barriers to health equity that northern communities face.

The NWAC PEKE has created four fact sheets on the Pathways exemplars – mental health, tuberculosis, diabetes, and oral health, to educate and raise awareness of the gender-based differences in health. With input from Pathways IRTs, Indigenous experts and community members, and the NWAC PEKE Advisory Committee, these fact sheets were made accessible on NWAC's website on June 2016. Collaboration between IRTs and community members ensured that the fact sheets were both accurate and culturally relevant. NWAC PEKE is currently working to update these Fact Sheets and ensure that the content is up to date, accessible, and inclusive of Two-Spirit and gender-diverse persons.

NWAC PEKE has begun working towards incorporating a more inclusive and diverse understanding of gender into its work. This work began with a two-day engagement session in March of 2018. The engagement session was held in Ottawa at the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health. The engagement session was called, "Restoring the Circle: Mental Wellness and Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ Community members." Mental wellness is one of the four pillars of Pathways PEKE, but so far, NWAC PEKE's efforts in this area have been solely focused on Indigenous women.

This engagement session was organized because NWAC PEKE recognized that in order for our work in this area to really address the multiple barriers maintained by colonialism, we need to incorporate an inclusive definition of gender. There is currently little literature that focuses on mental health and Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ persons, and broader health studies often do not include or accurately represent this population. Despite their lack of representation in the literature, existing research shows that Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ community members experience high rates of mental health disorders, and often encounter racism, homophobia, transphobia, stigma, and other barriers when accessing or attempting to access healthcare.

This engagement session brought together approximately twelve Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ community members from all over Canada. The first day of the engagement session, we held a sharing circle, where everyone present was encouraged to share their experiences with mental wellness and the healthcare system. On the second day of the engagement session, we had a graphic recorder present and focused on brainstorming positive solutions for what can be done to improve the health outcomes of Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ community members. The engagement session was a great success, and NWAC PEKE gained invaluable insight into what needs to be done to incorporate gender inclusivity and diversity into its work moving forward. NWAC PEKE is currently working to create a fact sheet, and webinar related to this engagement session.

Through the Pathways PEKE program, NWAC PEKE has helped facilitate an environment where Indigenous women and Two-Spirit and gender-diverse people are able to play an important role in the research process. NWAC PEKE has also worked to ensure that research teams are adequately incorporating gendered considerations into their work so that it better reflects the unique needs and lived experiences of Indigenous women and gender-diverse persons.

NWAC PEKE is running for its fourth year and many of the research teams NWAC PEKE supports are wrapping up one phase of their project working to scale up their projects. NWAC PEKE plans to work with research teams to facilitate knowledge translation and mobilization of their project findings in order to advocate for health equity on a policy level. NWAC PEKE will support research teams with community engagement and relationship building as they move forward.

For the duration of the project, NWAC PEKE is looking to facilitate community-based workshops related to the four Pathways pillars including workshops on land-based healing and mental wellness. These workshops will bring together researchers and community members around a specific theme, and ideally create an environment where researchers gain a better understanding of community priorities in these areas.

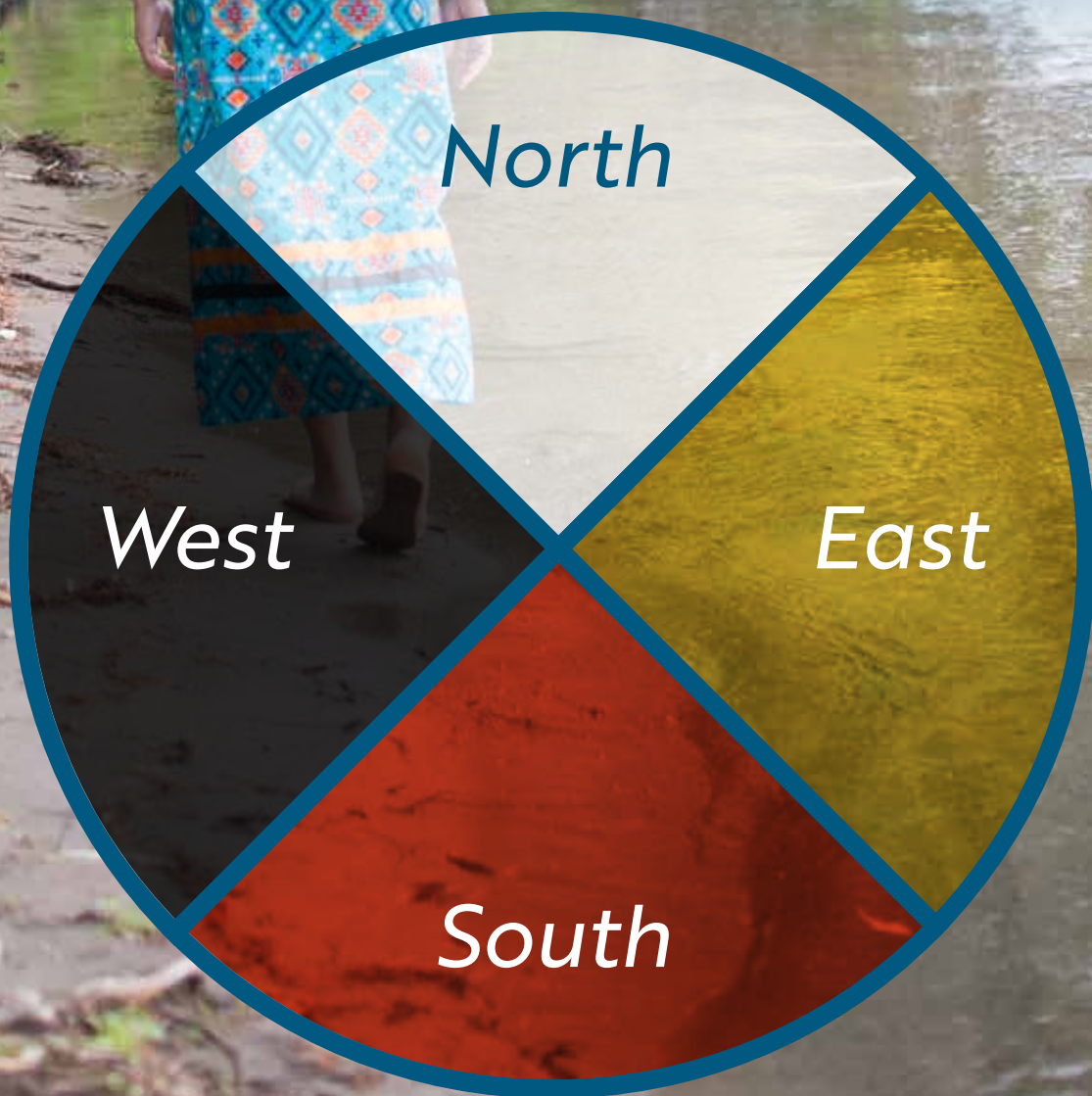
NWAC PEKE is also planning to create action-based resources related to the four Pathways pillars including colouring books, and activity books.



"The Medicine Wheel is a very powerful tool once you know how to use it in everyday life. Life begins in the east and travels around throughout life and by the time we are at the end of our cycle we finally realize what our roles are supposed to be! We carry on the Teachings of our ancestors for the women to lead by example and for the men to respect who we are and to walk side by side."

- Roseann Martin, NWAC Elder Advisor

MEDICINE WHEEL



Walking the RED Path – HIV/HCV Initiative

RED Path is a five-year project funded through the Public Health Agency of Canada's HIV and Hepatitis C (HCV) Community Action Fund. The project aims to develop a sustainable, evidence-based, and culturally relevant HIV and HCV intervention for Indigenous women in four federal correctional institutions. Overall, the project aims to strengthen capacity, identify and reduce barriers to health and social services, prevention, diagnosis and treatment for HIV, HCV, and other related sexually transmitted and blood borne infections (STBBIs). The project also increases uptake of prevention and harm reduction measures, thus improving health outcomes and preventing further transmission of HIV, HCV, and related STBBIs among Indigenous women in federal correctional institutions.

Indigenous people face higher rates of HIV incidence than non-Indigenous people do. It is estimated that the HIV incidence is 3.5 times higher than non-Indigenous people.¹ Indigenous women also face additional vulnerability to HIV infection, as they are exposed to risks such as violence, stigma, poverty, inaccessibility to health services, co-infection with other STBBIs, and so on.²

Indigenous women are also grossly over-represented in the corrections system. In Canada, 63% of all incarcerated women are Indigenous, which represents an increase of 85.7% increase in the last decade.^{3,4} They also represent nearly 50% of women classified as maximum-security prisoners and represent 31% of segregated prisoners.^{5,6}

In the first phase of the project, evidence will be gathered through an environmental scan consisting of a literature review, a resources scan, meetings with staff at Correctional Services Canada as well as at each institution and sharing circles with Indigenous female inmates. The sharing circles are to be used to gather information on inmates' knowledge of HIV, HCV and STBBIs, health services available and barriers to accessing these services, as well as inmates' experiences with stigma around HIV, HCV and related STBBIs. The environmental scan outputs will inform the implementation of program activities in the second phase of the project depending on the needs of the women in each institution.

During the first year of the project the following objectives were met: A literature review of HIV, HCV, and related STBBI interventions in prisons and/or amongst Indigenous populations, a resources scan of established resources used for HIV, HCV, and related STBBI prevention amongst Indigenous populations and/or inmate populations, re-establishing relationships with project partners who provided letters of support during the proposal application process, and re-establishing support from staff at federal correctional facilities. From the literature review and resources scan, we learned that resources and interventions specific to the prevention of HIV, HCV and related STBBIs for



Indigenous female inmates are scarce or do not exist. Given the unique life experiences of Indigenous women, there is a significant need to create these resources and interventions.

Project staff met with members of the Aboriginal Women's Offender's team at Correctional Services Canada to discuss project logistics and identify the federal correctional institutions with the highest proportions of Indigenous prisoners. Based on the discussions it was decided that the RED Path project would focus on The Fraser Valley Institution for Women in British Columbia, the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge in Saskatchewan, and both the Edmonton Institution for Women and Buffalo Sage Wellness House in Alberta.

In the first year of the project, the RED Path team has worked on re-building relationships with project partners including CATIE (Canadian Aids Treatment Information Exchange), PASAN (Prisoners with HIV/AIDS Support Action Network), CAAN (Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network), and All Nations Hope Network. A new relationship was also established with the Collaborating Centre for Prison Health and Education at the University of British Columbia (CCPHE). Discussions were planned with partners ensuing ways we can mutually benefit one another. Beginning in December 2017, The RED Path team travelled to each institution to meet with staff and to re-establish support for the project. Each of the four institutions has expressed their ongoing support for the project.

In preparation for working within federal correctional institutions, the RED Path team attended trainings to prepare to work with inmates and to hold sharing circles. Staff took a two-day "Prison 101" training with PASAN and attended several trauma-informed care workshops. Currently, the RED Path team is waiting for approval from the Public Health Agency of Canada's Research Ethics Board, before they can apply to CSC's external research process to get approval to begin the sharing circles.

Trauma Informed STBBI Resources

Funding provided by the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch of Health Canada (now situated in the Department of Indigenous Services Canada) allowed the Department of Health to hire a Project Coordinator. This position conducts community engagement with First Nations, Inuit and Métis service providers on the provision of trauma-informed, culturally-specific, and gender-based STBBI interventions for Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse persons.

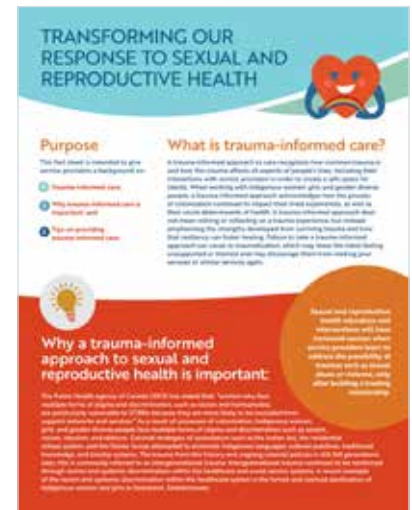
Despite the fact that Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people are highly overrepresented amongst HIV cases and other STBBIs, most STBBI services are not designed with Indigenous women in mind. Mainstream services are often highly inaccessible and for individuals with histories of trauma such as sexual abuse, it can be re-triggering. Given this knowledge, STBBI interventions for Indigenous women and girls need to be culturally relevant, gender-based and trauma-informed. A trauma-informed approach is holistic, as it addresses the underlying causes of the problem – the social determinants of health. We know that Indigenous women and girls vulnerability to STBBIs is intimately linked to a variety of determinants of health including poverty, housing insecurity, mental health and addictions, adverse childhood experiences, racism and unresolved intergenerational trauma as a result of colonialism and the legacy of the residential school system. STBBI interventions will have increased success when health care providers learn to address the possibility of traumas such as sexual abuse or violence, only after building a trusting relationship.

Therefore, our health department proposed to create:

1. Culturally relevant, gender-based and trauma-informed fact sheets on STBBIs (HIV, HCV, chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis).
2. A fact sheet for health care professionals and services providers on how to build a culturally relevant, trauma-informed relationship with Indigenous women and girls when providing STBBI prevention, testing, treatment, care and/or other supports for this population.
3. Culturally relevant, gender-based and trauma-informed workshop guide that can be used by and for Indigenous women and girls to educate Indigenous women and girls on STBBIs.

In order to ensure that NWAC's STBBI projects and resources are trauma-informed, NWAC health staff needed to receive trauma-informed training. Therefore, project staff participated in several trauma informed training sessions to have well versed staff in trauma-informed approaches to health care. This training aided the development of a culturally relevant and gender-based, trauma-informed lens informing all of the work that we do.

To develop our STBBI resources further, we organized and facilitated a one-day engagement session with Indigenous women and girls with lived experience with STBBIs, experts on trauma-informed care, and service providers who provide STBBI services (prevention, testing, treatment and care) to Indigenous women and girls. Indigenous women and girls living with STBBIs have directly experienced the factors making individuals vulnerable to STBBIs. Therefore, their inclusion in the development of resources will enhance the relevance, acceptability and effectiveness of the resources and/or interventions.

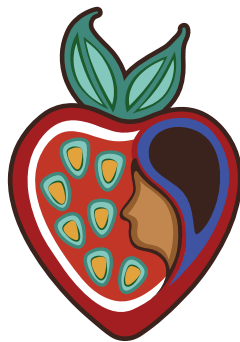


A communications plan was developed to ensure a targeted approach to the promotion of our STBBI resources through ongoing engagement and communication with Indigenous organizations and service providers across Canada. In addition to promoting our resources on our website, through our social media and PTMA membership, we will target Indigenous organizations and service providers who provide sexual health services for Indigenous women and girls.





YOUTH ADVOCACY AND DEVELOPMENT



Youth Advocacy and Development

A Message from the Director of Youth Advocacy and Development

When I started at NWAC, my goal was for us to have a unit that solely advocated for Indigenous youth at the national level. Today, a year and a half later, we have a Youth Advocacy and Development Unit (YADU) with a Youth Research Officer, Special Projects Officer and 6 summer students.

We've created a unit that approaches advocacy differently and is led by young Indigenous women working to ensure that a youth lens is applied on all the work we do.

We've hosted two national engagement sessions for young Indigenous women and gender-diverse youth on conserving biodiversity, wildlife, and habitat, and post-secondary education. We are continuing to develop new toolkits, resources, engagement strategies, supports, and training using a culturally relevant and gender-based analysis that incorporates the lens of Indigenous youth.

Moving forward, we will have our own NWAC youth website, social media and establish a national youth council that will allow us to engage Indigenous youth in a unique and meaningful way.

I am so proud to be leading this unit and cannot wait to see where we will be in a year and a half from now!

- Carrington Christmas, Director of Youth Advocacy and Development

Youth Advocacy and Development Summary

The Youth Advocacy and Development Unit (YADU) advocates for Indigenous youth and ensures they are equal stakeholders at all levels. The department works to develop policy, resources, and community engagement strategies to assist PTMAs, Indigenous communities and other stakeholders with building social, economic, and political capacity for their youth. YADU is led by and comprised of Indigenous youth who are committed to advancing the well-being of young Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse youth.

YADU's main work is finalizing the structure of the unit and acquiring funding to stabilize it within NWAC. In addition, we are developing a 5-year strategy and youth perspectives report to amplify the voices of Indigenous youth at the national level. Resources we are developing include a violence prevention toolkit, environmental toolkit, and community engagement strategy that will be distributed to our PTMAs and grassroots communities.

YADU will be launching its own website and social media forums allowing us to reach Indigenous youth better in a culturally relevant way tailored to their experiences and perspectives.



Restoring Indigenous Spirituality in the Environment (RISE)

For a long-time, NWAC has supported environmental sustainability and prioritized the involvement of Indigenous women as advocates and protectors of the environment. Through Restoring Indigenous Spirituality in the Environment (RISE), NWAC acknowledges the importance of including young Indigenous women and gender-diverse youth in these discussions and providing opportunities for them to share their lived experiences and concerns on biodiversity, wildlife, and habitat.

Youth have witnessed the impact of environmental degradation, and resource development without proper consultation with the people or consideration for them or the environment. Rapid changes in weather and climate also severely impact biodiversity and wildlife. In order for conservation initiatives to be successful, it requires the input and perspectives of young Indigenous women and gender-diverse youth.

RISE is a three-year project that incorporates traditional knowledge and works to enhance young Indigenous women and gender-diverse youth's ability to plan, organize, and host events in their communities.

The first year of the project had six deliverables:

1. Two teleconferences with the Youth Executives to develop ideas for the social media campaign;
2. Social media dissemination to discuss creating a social media campaign to outreach to youth;
3. In-person meeting with 4 Youth Executives + 10 local youth;
4. Video Vignettes from who attended the in-person meeting that outlines the significance of the land and environment to their culture; and,
5. Final Report that shows activities completed throughout the year and activity plan for the next two years.

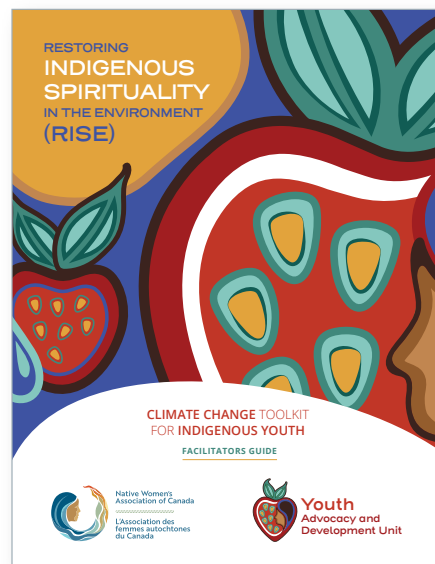
Participants in RISE stated how important it was for young people to be involved in protecting the land. It was highlighted that urban Indigenous youth often feel a disconnect to their land and culture and how difficult it can be to access traditional Knowledge Keepers. They asked how this project would help youth from city, rural, and reserve settings.

In response to the recommendations, the goals for the following year were to create a facilitators guide for youth, regardless of where they were located, to host their own events and projects within their communities. In addition to this, a national gathering was hosted in Ottawa with 4 Youth Executives, 4 selected participants from Ontario, Manitoba, British Columbia and Nova Scotia, as well as local youth from Ottawa. The 2-day



event consisted of breakout sessions, a sharing circle, and activities to facilitate discussion on what was needed to create a facilitators guide. The gathering highlighted the need for a new approach for when dealing with environmental issues that included the voices of young people. Youth felt they were frequently left out of important conversations and did not have access to resources or supports to become involved in environmental initiatives. It was important to the participants that Indigenous youth have an understanding on environmental issues impacting their communities and how they can become involved.

From this, a RISE facilitators guide was created. For the third year of the project, funding dollars will be given to communities to host a RISE event and encourage youth to become involved in conservation initiatives that protect biodiversity, wildlife, and habitat. To continue the work after the project finishes YADU will be developing a newsletter, blog and network for youth to continue discussions and support one another in ongoing initiatives that will be posted to NWAC's youth website and social media.



Post-Secondary Education

Indigenous Services Canada is taking steps to review the current programs and services geared to Indigenous students. This federal review aims to evaluate which programs are working for Indigenous students and where improvements can be made. NWAC engaged with Indigenous women and gender-diverse people across the country about their thoughts, beliefs, and recommendations on the current supports and programs offered to Indigenous postsecondary students. There are a variety of support programs ranging from direct funding for Indigenous post-secondary education (PSE) students, statutory funding programs, research funding, support for community partners in PSE, targeted education bursaries, sector-specific programs and labour market skills development.⁷

NWAC worked with Indigenous Services Canada to evaluate federal programs through a three-tiered engagement approach using a culturally relevant, gender-based approach. The engagement strategy began with a national survey, followed by four focus groups and a national engagement session on post-secondary education. Through the duration of this project, more than two hundred Indigenous women and gender-diverse people participated.

Four PTMA engagement sessions were held in Manitoba, Prince Edward Island, British Columbia and Saskatchewan. PTMAs were provided with background information regarding the project, topics to facilitate discussion, and reporting guidelines. PTMAs facilitated in person engagements through discussion and sharing circles. In these discussions, facilitators made it clear to participants that they were only to answer questions they felt comfortable with and they had the option to leave at any time.

An online survey was developed in English and was active for one month between May 23rd and June 13th, 2018 where 230 participants responded to the 39 questions provided. Survey questions were varied in response length from yes/no to multiple choice to full essay answers. Participants had the option of skipping questions or ending the survey at any point if they did not feel comfortable providing answers. Four participants were offered the chance to win a gift card for taking the time to fill out the survey.

The National Engagement Session invited 14 national students and 6 local students to participate. Elders were invited to provide traditional openings, closings, prayers, and emotional/spiritual support to students. NWAC invited one Inuit and one Métis Elder to participate in the two-day session. There were also graphic note takers present, designing notes into an 8x2 visual representation of themes students shared. Sessions included introductions, team building, traditional crafts, workshops, breakout sessions, group discussion and a sharing circle.

Barriers identified throughout the engagement session included financial, discrimination, and preparedness.

Financial

Financial barriers are one of the main obstacles Indigenous women and gender-diverse people must overcome when accessing PSE. Majority of respondents indicated their family had limited or no capacity to support them financially during their studies. Moreover, the limited awareness on what programs are available and financial aid opportunities discourages Indigenous students.

Discrimination

Another large barrier Indigenous students experience is they do not feel encouraged or supported to attend post-secondary, many respondents felt the tokenization they experienced was toxic and dissuaded them from either attending or completing their studies.

Preparedness

Respondents identified prerequisites and the quality of high school education on reserves, northern and remote communities was a large barrier for those looking to pursue post-secondary education. Inadequate education funding for Indigenous students is a direct impact from government policy decisions that do not fund reserves, northern and remote communities equally.

Participants believed having an onsite Elder in school, traditional counselling, academic guidance and cultural grounding would greatly improve their abilities to balance their personal and academic life. Many participants felt they had to compromise on their culture and attending ceremonies in order to have good grades in school. However, despite the barriers they experienced, majority of them were passionate about their education and were motivated by several factors, such as being a role model in their community, first generation in their family to attend post-secondary and to develop skills and knowledge they could bring back to







their communities.

NWAC recommended the government act on the following policy recommendations:

- 1.** Fund all Indigenous learners wishing to pursue PSE. Immediately increase funding to the Post-Secondary Student Support Program to eliminate the backlog of First Nations students wishing to access PSE as recommended by the TRC. Furthermore, expand this program to be accessible to ALL Indigenous students, including First Nations (non-status), Métis and Inuit communities.
- 2.** Create materials to increase awareness of PSE supports for Indigenous learners. Students are generally unaware the government provides band funding and other financial aid programs. Moreover, provide these materials to high schools, Indigenous Institutes of Higher Learning, band offices, and other community organizations to increase awareness of these programs.
- 3.** The creation of culturally safe spaces that are supported by their institutions that are visible and accessible on campuses.
- 4.** Indigenous peoples must have ownership and control over Indigenous curricula and priority must be given to Indigenous instructors and professors in postsecondary institutions to create them.
- 5.** Curricula that is developed must recognize the unique differences of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, cultures, and experiences. Curricula that is based on pan-Indigenous approaches and written by non-Indigenous peoples will continue to disenfranchise and disempower Indigenous peoples, and ultimately dissuade them from attending post-secondary education.
- 6.** Post-secondary institutions must be made safer for Indigenous women and gender-diverse people to attend and offer culturally relevant services in areas of: childcare, mental health, gender expression and identity, reproductive health, traditional counselling as well as legal supports.
- 7.** Post-secondary institutions must accommodate Indigenous students requesting spiritual or cultural leave. Moreover, providing staff and faculty members at these institutions with Indigenous-led cultural sensitivity training to ensure they have the understanding on how to engage and work with Indigenous students.
- 8.** Increase culturally relevant supports for Indigenous students transitioning from high school, northern and remote communities to urban and rural centres.
- 9.** All levels of governments (federal, provincial, territorial, and local) must invest in scholarships, grants, bursaries, awards, and funding for Indigenous women and gender-diverse people pursuing post-secondary education.
- 10.** Follow through with policy recommendations from Indigenous communities and organizations. Do not let this report and others that are part of this review process collect dust and go unimplemented. Reconciliation cannot happen without rebuilding trust with Indigenous communities and that includes students.

Quotes from Participants:

"My nieces and nephews, they are my motivation. Many of them grew up in the system, and I want to take care of them. Apparently to the system, I am not good enough to take care of them. I guess because I do not have my education. We don't do drugs or drink. I always want to bring them home. I have been a respite worker for many years and have fostered many kids, but we are still not good enough. I am a favorite foster mom to all the kids, I try and involve the parents and family. Not going to keep them away from them. My nieces and nephews – met my foster kids and they ask why I can't keep them. Show them I can graduate and that if you get your education it is going to take you places. They say well I don't have to graduate auntie doesn't have her education, so that is my motivation to get it."

- Anonymous, Manitoba focus group

"Education is my healing journey. I do things that give back to community. I go through the journey of research. I navigate and utilize the classroom to give me space to give back to my community."

- National Engagement Session Participant

"There is a lot of identity issues. I graduated, where do I go now. I had a hard time with academia because I had this societal pressure, that to be somebody you had to be successful and I did not know what it meant to be successful. Now that I am older, I realized that as Indigenous women success is very different for every individual. Success is having a roof over my head and having food on the table and spending time with my loved ones. That is success. I was yearning for what others thought about what success looked like."

-Anonymous, Manitoba focus group

"I feel like the hardest thing about post-secondary education for me is that idea that the only way you can learn or be educated is through a western way. And I see universities all the time invite Elders to their classrooms to talk but at the same time they don't value our Elders. There's all this funding to go away from our communities to these institutions and learn from our Elders, but like there's no funding to stay in our communities to learn from our Elders,"

- National Engagement Session Participant

"Another really hard part of going to post-secondary is not being able to participate in ceremony because we are so busy with deadlines and missing out on that part of ourselves. Over the last couple of years, I haven't been able to go home for our ceremonies which are very powerful for healing, like our sun dance, I haven't been able to do that. Even in land-based courses, they did not accommodate Indigenous students for their ceremonies or personal things."

- National Engagement Session Participant

NWAC will continue the dialogue on Indigenous students on post-secondary education and develop as all as distribute resources and supports to lessen the barriers highlighted in the engagement sessions. NWAC will push the recommendations to the government and advocate for Indigenous students to have access to equitable post-secondary education.



MÉTIS POLICY AND PROTOCOL AT NWAC

Métis communities are resilient and diverse. There are historic Métis communities who lived and moved with the fur trade, which continue to exist, and many Métis people who today live outside their communities across Canada and beyond. There are also contemporary Métis communities, where Métis people have found each other in a new place, choosing to continue to live in community and support each other. Our ancestors had a shared identity, and advocated for their collective interests and safety.

Our grandmothers, grandfathers, parents, siblings, and ancestors are important, valuable people who lived here in relationship with the land, each other, their First Nations relations, Christianity, and the Creator. Their communities were and are affected by a heavy influence of the Catholic Church and assimilation policies. They have diverse identities based on where they were, and how they survived. Their stories are valuable and need to be heard. We, as Métis people living today, need to hear them. In order to know where we are going, we need to know where we have come from. Our stories are so often told by others and are told inaccurately or erased entirely. NWAC is undertaking work to find and amplify Métis stories. Listening to our stories will enable NWAC to meaningfully advocate for issues that are of importance to Métis women, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people. This work complements the good work done by other organizations that serve Métis people and is being done for the benefit of all Métis women, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people.

If you are a Métis woman, Two-Spirit, or gender-diverse person, it is important you feel NWAC's work serves you. Please reach out and contribute to shaping the direction this work will take. NWAC has established a Métis Women, Two-Spirit, and Gender-Diverse People's Advisory Circle – it is open to any Métis woman, Two-Spirit, or gender-diverse person who wants to participate. There is no minimum commitment, and all communications come by email or telephone.

Participation in the Advisory Circle is an opportunity to contribute your thoughts, feelings, and priorities so they can inform NWAC's work. You will regularly receive requests to share your views on particular topics, as any feedback is always welcome. You will receive a summary of responses on any topic you contribute to, ensuring a back-and-forth information flow and broadening the information that exists and is available from grassroots Métis women, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people. You will also see content published and initiatives both result from the contributions you provide. Honouring reciprocity and accountability is the highest priority in this work. To find out more, please check out www.nwac.ca

NWAC is seeking opportunities to engage with Métis communities. Our communities hold our stories, and our communities have remained strong and active. Elders in our communities have held pieces of our histories and culture safe in their memories. Youth in our communities are seeking connection and this knowledge en masse. There is strength in our communities. There is strength in our shared lived experiences, in our shared drive to reconnect and in the way we honour our Elders by seeking the knowledge they hold. We can support each other. It is possible for us to care for each other as we walk along this journey, toward finding and seeking change and healing for all Indigenous people.

NWAC has always included Métis women in its advocacy work. Now, we look forward to building capacity to advocate specifically for issues of concern to Métis women, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people as well.



STRATEGIC POLICY



A Message from the Director of Strategic Policy

The past 12 months have been a period of phenomenal growth for the Strategic Policy Unit. Starting with just two full-time policy advisors last July, we have grown to a policy development team consisting of two Team Leads and six Policy Advisors. NWAC has benefited greatly during this time of growth with such dedicated staff who research, develop and share policy positions on the multiple intersecting areas that play a role in the lives of Indigenous women across Canada. Previously, NWAC policy tended to develop through work produced by people on short-term contract or hired specifically to write reports or other policy building documents. Now, NWAC's full-time policy team cover a wide variety of policy areas, which impact our Indigenous sisters and their communities continuously growing together.

In a few short months, NWAC has established a seasoned team of policy writers who have helped create a foundation on which we hope to build our archive of forward-thinking, advocacy-driven policy work. This work will support and inform all future actions taken by NWAC as a national organization representing First Nations, Inuit and Métis women, girls and gender-diverse people from coast-to-coast-to-coast. The voices of Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people are represented through the policy work completed at NWAC.

Going forward, we will continue to grow with the focus on establishing NWAC's reputation as the centre of excellence when it comes to providing an entirely cultural and gendered focussed policy perspective on issues including employment, training, the environment, prisons, human trafficking, education, housing, childcare and honouring our missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

- Marshall Ballard, Director of Strategic Policy

The Strategic Policy Unit advocates for Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people through research and policy development on issues that impact the lives of Indigenous women, girls, Elders, youth, Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ people in First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities across Canada. The Strategic Policy Unit develops and expands various policy areas as identified by Indigenous women, girls, gender-diverse people and their communities. Each policy area is analysed and interpreted at multiple application levels including: individual and community impact, Indigenous organization partnerships, federal, provincial and territorial government involvement, and NWAC Board of Director's direction.

We strive to ensure the voices of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people are meaningfully represented in all discussions we participate in or contribute to. This is accomplished through informed engagement with Indigenous women who are technical and/or lived experience experts, surveys to reach a wider cross-section of women in First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities, meetings with groups or individuals to gain a better understanding of local perspectives on policy areas, and accessing the significant lived and learned experience that resides in our Board of Directors and Provincial and Territorial Member Association (PTMA) memberships.

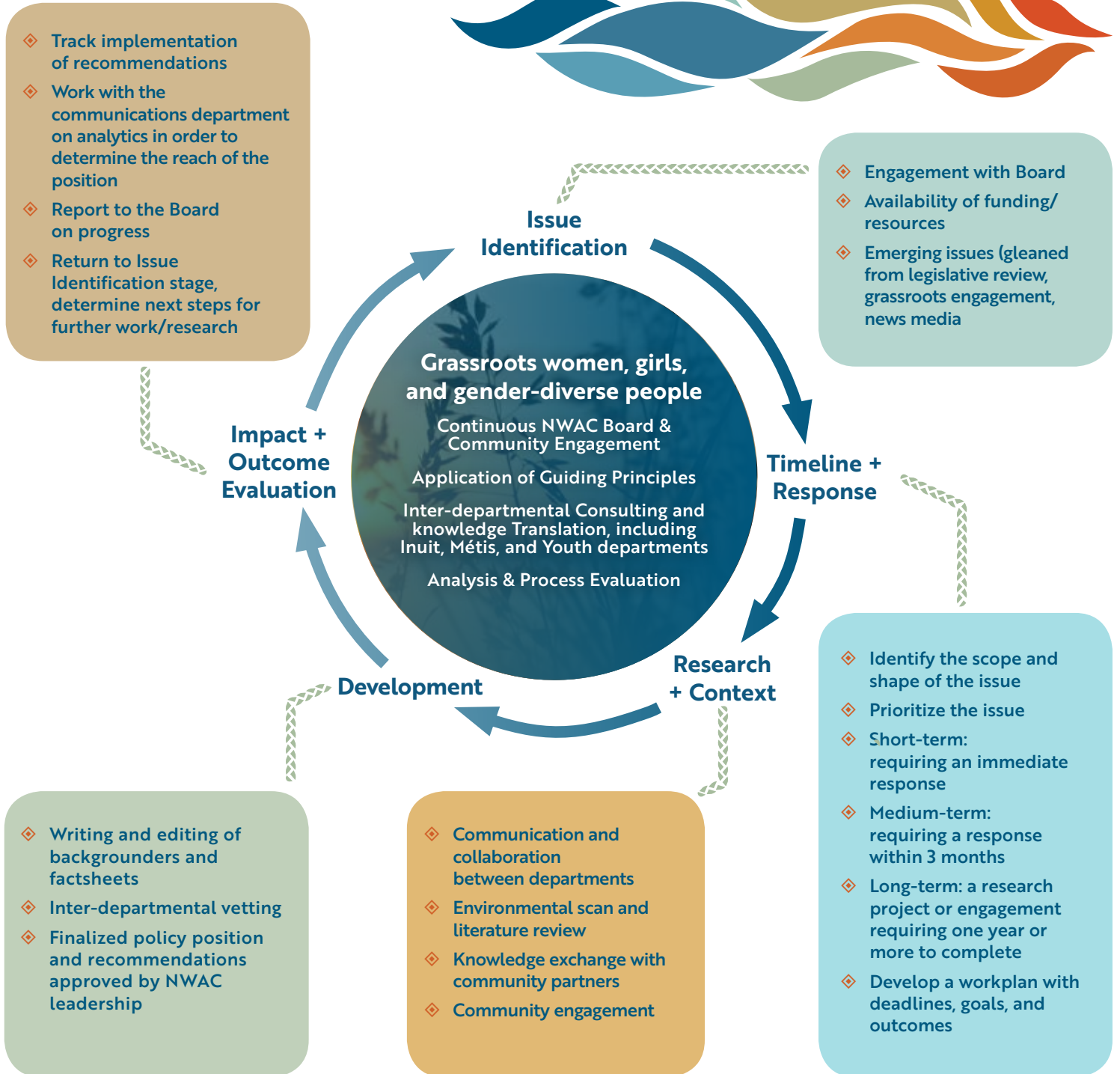
The Strategic Policy Unit approaches its work through the full implementation of the Policy Development Framework. This Framework is informed by our guiding principles, methodology, and ethics and it outlines how the policy unit identifies, researches, and responds to different policy issues. Grassroots women, girls, and gender-diverse people are at the centre of this Framework as we go through a continuous engagement, research, development, and impact cycle. The guiding principles are the overall principles infusing every aspect of NWAC's policy work. These principles include:

- ◆ Policy that is informed by the lived experiences of grassroots Indigenous women
- ◆ Policy that is intersectional and gender-based
- ◆ Policy that is decolonized and community-based

While applying these guiding principles, the policy unit also approaches research from a specific methodology that is community-based and driven, culturally-relevant, accessible, intersectional gender-based, and trauma-informed and strengths-based. Applying these tools helps the policy unit develop dynamic, authentic, and respectful policy positions and advocacy that are responsive to community needs and reflect a comprehensive understanding of the diverse realities of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Informed by our guiding principles, methodology, and ethics, this framework outlines how NWAC identifies, researches, and responds to different policy issues.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This outlines the overall principles infusing every aspect of NWAC's policy work.



INFORMED BY THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF GRASSROOTS INDIGENOUS WOMEN

- ◆ Preservation of cultural teachings through connections to Elders and traditional knowledge-carriers
- ◆ Youth engagement and mobilization
- ◆ Approaching engagement in a way that is mindful of the many contexts in which Indigenous women live

Outcome: NWAC's advocacy is authentic, respectful, and responsive.



INTERSECTIONAL AND GENDER-BASED

- ◆ Addresses multiple and intersecting barriers maintained by colonial structures
- ◆ Adopts and promotes an inclusive and diverse definition of gender

Outcome: NWAC's work is anti-oppressive and does not erase any of the communities within our communities.



DECOLONIZED AND COMMUNITY-BASED

- ◆ Promotes local control and governance over the design and delivery of programs and services
- ◆ Centered around Indigenous women as rights-holders
- ◆ Responsive to emergent needs of communities

Outcome: NWAC's work actively empowers communities in a decolonizing and responsive way.



METHODOLOGY

This outlines the Strategic Policy Unit's approach to researching and producing knowledge.

COMMUNITY-BASED AND DRIVEN

NWAC's policy work will reflect the priorities and needs of communities. Understanding the exploitative and extractive legacy of research experienced by many Indigenous peoples, NWAC's research will be accountable to the grassroots women and communities that guide and inform our policy development.

CULTURALLY-RELEVANT

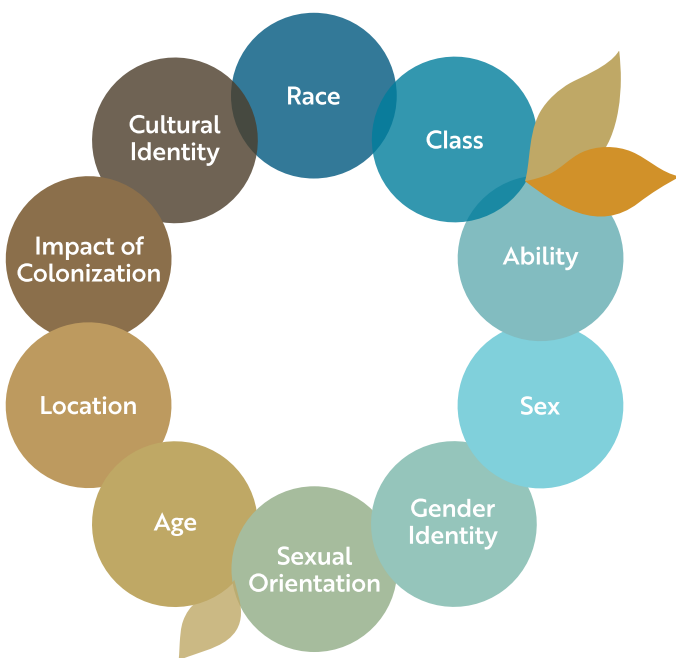
NWAC's work will be infused with traditional ways of knowing that fall outside of the Western or empirical paradigm. This includes positioning storytelling, felt knowledge, and oral traditions as valid and crucial forms of knowledge within our work. NWAC's policy work will additionally reflect a comprehensive understanding of Indigenous and settler-colonial history in Canada, with distinctions between and among First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities.

ACCESSIBLE

NWAC's policy work will be accessible to the women who co-author it, both in terms of language and physical availability. All surveys and story gathering will be multi-medium, available both online and in hard copy, in order to reach as much of our communities as possible. At each stage, limits and constraints of the information gathering processes will be clearly acknowledged and represented.

INTERSECTIONAL AND GENDER-BASED

NWAC's work will reflect an intersectional understanding of identity and oppression that recognizes that Indigenous women face multiple barriers that create complex, interlocking social and economic barriers. In advocating for Indigenous women and in researching the barriers that impact them the most, NWAC applies a gender-based and intersectional lens that attempts to include, but is not limited to:



TRAUMA-INFORMED AND STRENGTH-BASED

NWAC's policy writing, research, and engagement with women will be cognisant of the historical and personal trauma Indigenous women carry with them and will not retraumatize or revictimize in its work. This includes (but is not limited to) avoiding language that could be read as victim-blaming, incorporating trigger warnings, not dehumanizing our communities, and focusing on community-based solutions and strengths. In-person engagement sessions will have both Elders and mental health professionals present for support and guidance in navigating discussions that may be triggering.

Policy Areas

Accessibility

Living on the land for generations has enabled Indigenous peoples to develop an understanding of wellness that is more expansive than the Western concept of health as it includes physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions. Wellness must be understood holistically and dynamically as all these spheres of wellness intersect and fluctuate throughout a person's lifetime. There is an urgent need to ensure the accessibility needs and rights of Indigenous women and girls living with a disability are properly met through the development of policy and legislation and implementation and delivery of services at the national, provincial, territorial and local levels.

Upwards of 450,000 Indigenous people identify as having a disability, functional, or activity limitation, but it is unknown how many are women, girls, or gender-diverse because of inaccurate and insufficient data. Indigenous people are more susceptible to living with a disability because of the current social and political atmosphere and the continuous impact colonization has on Indigenous communities. Moreover, Indigenous people are more likely to acquire a disability than to be born with one because of influential environmental factors including not being able to access supports to improve their social determinants of health (i.e. education, healthcare, land, etc.). The social, political, and economic marginalization of Indigenous women today limits their access to necessary and appropriate supports and services that reduce the impacts of accessibility barriers.

Employment and Social Development Canada funds NWAC to carry out a culturally relevant, gender-based analysis of the new Federal Accessibility Legislation. Over the past year, NWAC has worked closely with seven other accessibility and disability rights organizations to inform and produce government and community informational resources about accessibility experiences of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people. NWAC is working to improve Indigenous organizations' understanding of disability and how to meet accessibility needs, and with non-Indigenous accessibility organizations on creating culturally safe spaces that are accessible for Indigenous women and their families.

"I would like to see an affirmation or recognition of Indigenous people's rights to uphold our own concepts of disability and by doing so, our own treatment plans and interventions. I would like these to be considered equally legitimate to Western conception and resourced accordingly. This should also be upheld in all support services – not just medical supports – including educational institutions and workplaces."

- NWAC survey participant (2017)

Milestones

In 2017-2018, NWAC engaged with Indigenous women and gender-diverse people with varying abilities and disabilities as well as their caregivers as part of a federally funded engagement for developing the first ever Federal Accessibility Legislation.

NWAC conducted two online surveys which were disseminated to community-based, Indigenous specific disability support providers and networks, and through NWAC social media.

An interim report was produced with the results of the first survey in Spring 2017, and a webinar was hosted with the results of the second survey in Spring 2018.

A final report was completed in May 2018 and is available in English, French, and in accessible formats.

"It is so hard to just find adequate emotional/spiritual supports, never mind get there. Especially if you don't live in a major city. Social supports need to be provided in the area that people live in...in their homes...especially in rural areas, and it needs to be spiritually appropriate."

- NWAC survey participant (2017)





Child Welfare

Indigenous children are being removed from their families and communities at an alarming rate. It is imperative the rights of Indigenous children and their mothers, aunties, and other caregivers are recognized and protected. NWAC advocates on the issues of child welfare and child and family services through the development of policy, informing federal legislation, and supporting the implementation and delivery of services at the national, provincial, territorial and local levels.

Before colonization, Indigenous communities had their own well-established systems of childcare and education rooted in the community, the natural environment, and spiritual teachings. In 1951, revisions to the Indian Act granted provincial child welfare agencies legal authority on reserves leading to Indigenous children being taken into government care at an unbelievable rate. More than 11, 000 First Nation and other Indigenous children were adopted; often removed from their homes without knowledge or consent from families or communities. Mainly white families adopted these children resulting in cultural and identity dislocation and confusion. Today,

there are more Indigenous children in the child welfare system than at the height of the residential school system. This generation is recognized as the “Millennium Scoop.”

Milestones

This is a new policy file for NWAC that is being built from the ground up through extensive research, development of background materials, factsheets, and building important community and individual partnerships.

In January 2018 NWAC hosted a national conference on Child and Family Services in conjunction with the new Indigenous Services Canada and Crown-Indigenous Relations departments (formerly known as Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada). Service providers, government employees, representatives from Indigenous organizations, and other participants from across Canada joined NWAC and Ministers Bennett and Philpott to discuss the current emergency state of Child and Family Services for Indigenous families.

Education (Early Learning & Child Care, K to 12, Post-Secondary)

NWAC is working to ensure the rights and concerns of Indigenous women concerning early learning and child care are properly reflected through:

- ◆ Continued dialogue with the federal government regarding a national framework on early learning and child care;
- ◆ Engagement with the grassroots women in our communities to determine how to create or strengthen early learning and child care programs which better integrate traditional knowledge with western knowledge to reflect the holistic, lifelong, experiential, spiritually oriented and communal that is important to many in our communities;
- ◆ Advocating for culture and language learning for Indigenous children within ELCC programming provided in Indigenous communities; and
- ◆ Advocating for culturally-relevant early learning and child care programming supports for Indigenous women and their children.
- ◆ NWAC is working to ensure:
- ◆ Establishment of educational systems and curricula rooted in the community, the natural environment, spirituality, and accurately reflects the history of Indigenous peoples both prior to and following colonization;
- ◆ Access to educational opportunities for Indigenous youth that are culturally appropriate yet prepare them adequately to live and prosper in any environment;
- ◆ K-12 education provides opportunities for Indigenous children and youth to learn and practice their language, history, culture and spirituality relative to the area in which they live and among other Indigenous youth; and
- ◆ Post-Secondary Education (PSE) is accessible to all Indigenous women and gender-diverse people.

Indigenous peoples have their own systems of child care and education rooted in community, the natural environment, and spiritual teachings. At the beginning of colonization, settlers introduced the reservation system and residential school system responsible for the cultural genocide imposed upon Indigenous peoples in Canada. The Canadian policy of assimilating Indigenous peoples came from the belief that European worldviews were superior – an imposition that continues to be perpetuated through Canadian education systems. Residential schools were established in 1880 and the last school was closed in 1996. These schools functioned under racist and sexist policies and practiced abusive and inhumane discipline on students to discourage the continuation of cultural indigeneity. This legacy is continued today with the chronic underfunding of Indigenous operated schools, lack of indigenizing curriculum, and deficiency in culturally relevant child care.



Drug Policy/Cannabis

NWAC is working to develop policies that will not further criminalize or marginalize Indigenous women and communities; create and prioritize gender-based, culturally-appropriate, trauma-informed supports and services for mental health and addiction; and allow Indigenous communities to determine their own priorities and needs as they relate to drug policy.

Drug policy is a relatively new file for NWAC, but substance abuse and addiction have been concerns for Indigenous communities for years. The legacy of colonization has created the conditions by which Indigenous peoples experience disproportionate rates of substance abuse, addiction, and criminalization through drug use. NWAC hopes to develop this policy file to draw attention to the colonial origins of substance abuse in Indigenous communities and propose recommendations related to drug policy that will support and benefit Indigenous women.

Milestones

In its research and background materials, NWAC has been working to develop policy related to cannabis legalization and its potential impacts on Indigenous women and communities.

NWAC submitted a brief to the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples concerning their study on the effects of cannabis legalization on Indigenous communities on June 2018. Our recommendations centre around reinforcing the right of Indigenous communities to refuse legalization, the need to create community-based harm reduction strategies, supports for Indigenous communities who wish to participate in the cannabis market, and developing strengths-based, culturally-safe, trauma-informed services for addiction and mental health issues.

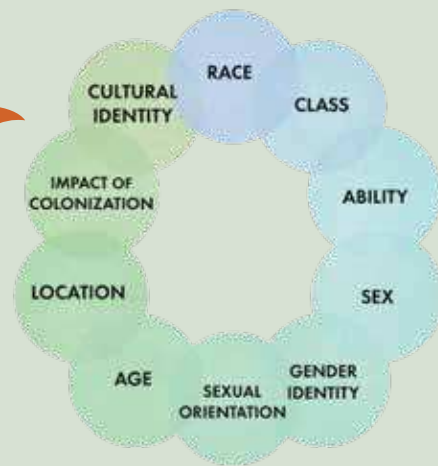


Coerced Sterilization

The continued coerced sterilization of Indigenous women in Canada must end immediately. Indigenous women must be free to make their own family planning decisions and have ownership over their reproductive rights. Canadian health authorities cannot continue to commit cultural genocide against Indigenous people through the sterilization of Indigenous women based on racist, sexist, and classist policies.

NWAC's Strategic Policy Unit has been assisting the legal department on the recent coerced sterilization cases that have arisen in Saskatchewan. Over 60 Indigenous women have come forward stating they had been coerced into having a tubal ligation in Saskatoon hospitals. Policy is developing background research and support to Maurice Law who is representing the women impacted by this tragic event.

NWAC's Strategic Policy Unit will finalize and release the policy background on the NWAC website. This background will be used to inform Indigenous women and their families about the history and continuation of sterilization practices on Indigenous people in Canada. NWAC policy will work with the legal and health units to continue to advocate for better policies on tubal ligation and Indigenous women's care in Canadian health care systems.



Culturally-Relevant Gender-Based Analysis

The process by which NWAC analyzes legislation, develops policy recommendations, and conducts research can be described as culturally-relevant gender-based analysis (CR GBA). Gender-based analysis aims to meaningfully address inequality across and between genders, acknowledging that identical treatment of genders does not produce the same outcomes. More accurately, treatment often magnifies existing inequalities and structural barriers faced by marginalized people. CR GBA is an integral part of making policy decisions that are evidence-based, as evidence should sway and inform decisions and policy development. The principles guiding NWAC's CR GBA include aiming for the co-development of legislation and policy; improving Indigenous women and non-binary peoples' quality of life and access to services; pushing for trauma-informed service delivery that has a demonstrated awareness of intergenerational trauma and historical contexts and is cognisant of the resilience of Indigenous women; and the implementation of the TRC Calls to Action and UNDRIP, with full collaboration with Indigenous communities, and in the interest of community autonomy, and cultural revitalization. In examining issues intersectionally, NWAC's policy staff work to consider and outline the specific impacts of the following factors:

Milestones

All of NWAC's work within each policy file can be described as culturally relevant, gender-based analysis; however, some notable work from the past year include:

NWAC conducted a culturally relevant, gender-based analysis of Correctional Service of Canada's National Employability Skills Program, which aims to give prisoners pragmatic employment skills and ease reintegration after completing their sentences in March 2018. NWAC's recommendations in this report centered around the need for employment training, such as the NESP, to reflect the complex interrelations of inter-generational trauma, gender diversity, socio-economic disadvantage, and other systemic factors that impact Indigenous women. We also emphasized program materials and staff training must be gender-based, culturally-appropriate, trauma-informed, and completed in consultation with Indigenous women themselves.

NWAC produced a preliminary research report on CR GBA as a framework and its ties to Indigenous feminism and intersectionality as fields of inquiry April 2018. NWAC is currently revising and updating its central framework on conducting culturally-relevant gender-based analysis to be more intersectional, inclusive, and gender-diverse.

Milestones

The ELCC engagement and reporting project wrapped up in Fall 2017 with the submission of a final report to Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). Comments on the federally drafted Indigenous ELCC Framework were provided in Winter 2017 and the final Framework will be released in Summer 2018.

NWAC policy is growing this area of advocacy through the creation of comprehensive background documents and plans for community toolkits and outreach opportunities.

NWAC policy together with the youth department developed and conducted an online survey, in-person roundtable engagement session, and several PTMA-led engagement sessions on PSE experiences. A final report with engagement findings and recommendations was submitted in Summer 2018 to the federal government and will be made available through NWAC's website.

"Colonization, especially the impacts of the residential school era and the 60s Scoop disrupted the innate capacity families and communities held to care for their children. Institutional care and the professionalization of early learning and childcare has in effect usurped the natural state of parenting and flow of learning in Indigenous communities."

- North West Territories session

"The ELCC programs should have an elder component. In Fon Du Lac they have the grandparents of the children (the guardians) that sit in the classroom with the children. This helps with providing the children with a sense of security."

- Saskatchewan session





Emergency Management

Emergency Management has been a very active file for NWAC in the past six months. Previous work has been related to evacuations, flood risk, violence against women during displacement, as well as gender-based, trauma-informed supports for those experiencing disaster events. NWAC currently has funding from Public Safety Canada for a project to increase Indigenous women's participation in emergency management activities which includes the distribution of an online survey, providing feedback on the new Emergency Management Strategy for Canada, and the Risks and Capabilities Inventory Project. The Inventory Project seeks to determine the specific vulnerabilities and response capabilities of hundreds of individual Indigenous communities including the specific environmental and geographical risks and existing resources to respond to emergencies. NWAC also participates in conference calls for the Indigenous Emergency Management Working Group, the Emergency Management Exemplary Service Award General Selection Committee, and the Search and Rescue Advisory Council.

NWAC is working to develop policy that will:

- ❖ Ensure Indigenous women and their communities have the agency to determine their own protocols and best practices around emergency management;
- ❖ Build capacity and access to resources so Indigenous communities are able to develop emergency plans that are culturally specific and community owned;
- ❖ Ensure Indigenous women are recognized in their roles as caretakers and the necessary supports are provided so they can fully participate in the rebuilding and recovery of their communities following an emergency;
- ❖ Ensure services are responsive to the physical, emotional and cultural needs of Indigenous women are included in disaster planning;
- ❖ Acknowledging and preparing for the potential for increased gender-based and domestic violence in the wake of a disaster event; and
- ❖ Ensure that the necessary infrastructure and supports exist to implement emergency search and rescue plans when Indigenous women are reported missing.

Milestones

NWAC participated in a technical-level roundtable with federal, provincial, and territorial Ministers responsible for Emergency Preparedness regarding flood risks in November 2017.

NWAC submitted its end of year progress report and a fulsome environmental scan to Public Safety Canada in March 2018.

NWAC presented at an Emergency Management Priorities meeting between Ministers and NIOs to stress the need for recognizing delivery of services that reflect the specific needs of Indigenous women during emergency situations in May 2018.

NWAC launched a survey to uncover Indigenous women's experiences of emergency evacuations and natural disasters in June 2018. The survey will run until Fall 2018 and the information will be summarized and reported to Public Safety Canada to inform future emergency planning strategies.

Environment & Biodiversity

NWAC has been very active with the environment file the past few months. Our approach to environment is guided by years of consultation and traditional understandings that Indigenous women are inextricably connected to the environment. Currently, NWAC is the only women's organization sitting at most of the environment decision-making tables and we will continue to strongly advocate for more Indigenous women to be sitting at decision-making tables at local, national, and international environment events. NWAC's environmental policy pertains to issues of climate change, wildlife conservation, clean energy and oil, minerals and metals, biodiversity conservation, land-body-culture connections, and legislative changes in any of these areas. NWAC partners with several communities, non-government organizations, government departments, and international bodies, and continues to seek out new partnership and consultative opportunities.

NWAC is working to ensure that:

- ◆ The voices and interests of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people are well represented on the local, national and international stages in relation to environmental protection, climate change and land stewardship to guarantee that Indigenous rights and livelihoods are advanced over those of government and industry;
- ◆ Recognition and creation of opportunities for Indigenous women to participate as technical experts and carriers of traditional knowledge in decision-making concerning environmental and biodiversity issues; and

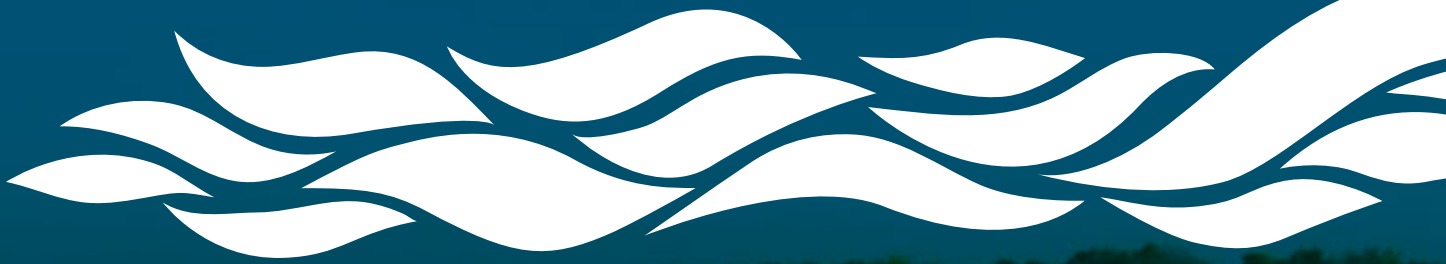


- ◆ Governments and resource industries work effectively with NWAC to create culturally-safe, trauma-informed spaces in which Indigenous women have full and meaningful participation in efforts to reduce the harmful effects of industry in our communities while working toward equitable representation of Indigenous women in the sharing of the benefits that result.

Milestones

NWAC policy participates in several environmental advisory groups and responds to legislative changes impacting the environment such as the National Boreal Caribou Knowledge Consortium and Bill C-69. These groups are at both the domestic and international levels and span several environmental concerns such as wildlife, water quality, and appropriate consultative procedures with Indigenous communities.





United Nations Framework on the Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

NWAC's Strategic Policy Unit prepared NWAC legal to attend the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform technical negotiations in Bonn, Germany in 2017 to advocate for Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people being represented at the Platform.

We have written several submissions to the Canadian delegation and continue to advise them in a close capacity along with other NIOs.

Parallel to this Platform, NWAC is also advising on the development of a Gender Action Plan (GAP) and advocating for the development and implementation of the GAP to be integrated into other UNFCCC processes instead of remaining in a silo.

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) – Post 2020 Discussion Group

NWAC policy researched and provided four policy analysis and recommendation papers to the CBD Post 2020 Discussion Group and continues to provide advice, direction, and recommendations.

NWAC policy provided a lengthy culturally relevant and gender-based research paper to the National Convention on Biological Diversity for Canada's 6th National Report detailing the importance of the environment and biodiversity conservation for Indigenous women and their communities. It also reported on the federal government's progress on meeting the Aichi Targets and CBD post 2020 targets. This report is currently not public.

Energy, Climate Change, and Mining

NWAC policy attended a three-day meeting hosted by Fisheries and Oceans Canada in Montreal, Québec to evaluate and provide comments on marine environment oil spill cleanup research proposals. This Multi-Partner Research Initiative (MPRI) group will be meeting regularly to ensure all approved research initiatives are inclusive and respectful of Indigenous people and their relationships with the environment.

NWAC policy produced an environment factsheet detailing the impacts of climate change and extractive industries on Indigenous women, girls, gender-diverse people, and their communities.



Food & Water

Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people and their communities have strong collective and individual understandings of the importance of traditional food systems. NWAC advocates for the protection of traditional food sources, for a national food policy that is representative of Indigenous hunting, gathering, and fishing practices, and for the improved access of healthy, affordable foods for all Indigenous women and their communities.

Food gathering, preparation, and consumption are integral parts of Indigenous cultures. Cultural teachings come from the lands, waters, and animals which are learnt by women and passed on through generations of strong communities. Indigenous people's relationship to food is holistic and sustainable because it is based on mutual respect for the animals they hunt and the plants they harvest. As a result of the Residential School system, pollution of Indigenous lands and of the ongoing effects of colonialism, many teachings regarding traditional Indigenous food systems have not been passed onto new generations. The introduction of Western processed foods in Indigenous communities has changed many people's relationship with food. This has ultimately led many First Nations, Inuit and Métis to collectively consume less traditional foods and as a result, many communities face poorer health outcomes. Part of the reconciliation process in Canada must be an acknowledgment of the damage that the introduction of Western processed foods, agriculture systems, and ongoing environmental degradation has had on Indigenous communities.

Milestones

NWAC completed a food policy engagement project with Agriculture and Agri-foods Canada which included consulting the public on a National Food Policy through an online survey, food summit and engagement sessions with NWAC PTMAs and Board of Directors.

As part of the food policy engagement project, a final report was written and disseminated through NWAC networks with background research, engagement results, and recommendations for the federal National Food Policy.

"It is vital that there are educational opportunities for Indigenous women to learn how to secure food, practice ceremony, prepare of food and learn how to budget."

- Participant at the Alberta Aboriginal Women's Society Engagement Session

"I feel greatly empowered being able to select/ forage for food. My desire is to pass this knowledge on to others. Knowing where this comes from and the efforts made to harvest teaches us appreciation for the community and it's gifts."

- Anonymous Survey Respondent

Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+

Historically, NWAC has not done any work or engagement on the needs and barriers faced by Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ women and gender-diverse people. However, today, NWAC recognizes that Indigenous Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ people are disproportionately impacted by systemic discrimination. While this discrimination is rooted in colonialism and racism, it is further compounded and upheld by patriarchy and heteronormativity.

These structures of oppression have made mainstream society particularly toxic to individuals whose gender identity, expression, and or sexuality falls outside of what is considered normal. These additional layers of marginalization produce specific barriers to accessing essential services such as housing, employment, and health care. As a result, these individuals are often more at risk to various forms of violence and are not able or invited to participate in decision-making conversations that directly impact their lives. Due to the internalization of this prejudice at the community level, many Indigenous Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ peoples may also face discrimination within their communities.

NWAC recognizes that by not responding to the gender diversity within our communities, we risk replicating the oppression of that community and becoming complicit in this erasure, enabling the marginalization of multi-barriered Indigenous people. Moving forward, we commit to doing better.

Milestones

In summer 2017, NWAC drafted an engagement strategy for connecting with Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ women, girls, and gender-diverse people. We are currently seeking funding for this multi-year project.

In March 2018, NWAC's Pathways PEKE coordinator organized and hosted "Restoring the Circle: Mental Wellness and Two-Spirit & LGBTQ+ Community Members." The session was extremely important, connective, and pivotal for NWAC as an advocacy organization. In sharing their stories, community members were generous and candid, providing invaluable recommendations on how Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ access to mental health services could be improved.



Two-Spirit

Coined by Myra Laramee in 1990, the term "Two-Spirit" is a translation of the Anishinaabemowin term niizh manidoowag, "two-spirits". Other nations have terms or understandings within their respective languages that reflect distinct understandings of gender and sexuality.

Housing & Homelessness

Over the past 20 years, NWAC has raised the issue of Indigenous women and housing and homelessness at a range of different levels, and in relation to a range of issues. This has generally centered around the intersections between Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse peoples' access to safe and reliable housing and issues related to poverty, violence, sex discrimination and status, and criminalization, all of which impact this access.

Due to a range of intersecting social and economic barriers stemming from past and ongoing colonization, Indigenous women are overrepresented among homeless people and are more frequently in need of temporary housing and access to shelters. In relation to housing and homelessness, NWAC is working to ensure that:

- ◇ Housing concerns for Indigenous women, families, and communities, both on-reserve and in urban centres, are prioritized in government housing policies;
- ◇ The implementation of community-based housing initiatives are centered around holistic community supports to secure and maintain safe, reliable housing for Indigenous women and their families;
- ◇ Lived experience is at the forefront of the National Housing Strategy, Homelessness Partnering Strategy, and other housing policies and that they support the inclusion and participation of Indigenous women and girls; and
- ◇ Shelters for women leaving situations of violence are responsive to the physical, emotional, and cultural needs of Indigenous women and that services at these shelters work towards minimizing the potential for continued systemic harm to Indigenous women.



Milestones

NWAC has submitted a final report to INAC related to the First Nations Housing Strategy in May 2018. This report included a research summary as well as the results from our Board of Directors engagement session.

In April 2018, NWAC participated in the Human-Rights Based Approach to Housing Stakeholder Roundtable in Ottawa, put on by the Canadian Housing and Mortgage Corporation where we reinforced that a rights-based approach to housing must actively engage with the issue of social and economic inequality for those most in need of housing. Issues related to housing are also issues related to health, education, criminalization, and child welfare. We also stressed the need to prioritize housing for women leaving situations of violence, supporting transitional housing for women leaving prison and children aging out of government care, and involving those with lived experience of discrimination, housing insecurity, and homelessness in the development of housing strategies and policies.

In June 2018, NWAC presented at the Women's Shelters Canada conference where we highlighted the connection between housing, homelessness, and violence against Indigenous women including the insufficiency of accessible shelters and affordable housing for Indigenous women leaving abusive situations as well as best practices from shelters serving Indigenous women.



Human Trafficking

NWAC is continuing to strengthen its policy position for human trafficking by conducting research, writing background documents, and participating in discussions and events relating to human trafficking. Human trafficking is a persisting issue in Canada, with majority of the victims being Indigenous women and girls. In addition to bringing international awareness to this problem, policy is continuing to push the Government of Canada to address the underlying systemic issues that make Indigenous women and girls vulnerable to being trafficked, such as precarious housing, violence against Indigenous women, lack of access to supports, and many more.

NWAC is working to develop policy responses that will push federal, provincial, territorial and Indigenous governments to:

- ❖ Eliminate the overrepresentation of Indigenous women as victims of human trafficking;
- ❖ Develop targeted policy responses and supports to address the precarious social and economic positions which place Indigenous women at greater risk of being trafficked;
- ❖ Acknowledge and develop responses to the increased rates of precarious housing and employment situations which result in higher numbers of Indigenous youth, especially those transitioning out of the Child Welfare System, to be at a greater risk of being trafficked; and
- ❖ Develop adequate culturally relevant supports to balance the multiple forms of marginalization of Indigenous LGBTQ+ and Two-Spirit youth who face higher risks of trafficking and exploitation.

Milestones

In October 2017, NWAC attended the OSCE Forum on Human Trafficking.

In February 2018, NWAC attended and networked at a presentation and discussion on human trafficking, hosted by the United States Embassy in Ottawa. The discussion was led by the Assistant United States Attorney of the Northern District of New York, who presented on human trafficking along the Canada-United States border.

In April 2018, G7 Ministerial Meeting - Prior to the 2018 G7 Summit, NWAC was invited to participate in a ministerial meeting with the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Ralph Goodale, to discuss some of the most pressing issues regarding human trafficking in Canada. This information was used to prepare him for his G7 Ministers Meeting.

In June 2018, NWAC submitted a brief to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights on the trafficking of Indigenous women and girls in Canada.



International Policy

NWAC is actively working to grow its international reputation and make connections with Indigenous women and their communities and organizations worldwide. This year, NWAC has made it a priority to strengthen engagement with international institutions to advocate for Indigenous women's rights.

NWAC actively works to enhance and enforce Indigenous human rights internationally and domestically by engaging with various United Nations bodies and other international institutions and submitting recommendations to international human rights bodies. The international policy file also includes solidarity and relationship-building with Indigenous women and gender-diverse people around the world through diplomatic exchanges.

Milestones


NWAC participates in various international events annually, such as the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) and the Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW), to ensure Indigenous women's voices are heard in all of the discussions. NWAC additionally ensures they are included in any documents produced to hold international and governmental officials accountable for their actions and make sure the documents do not violate their international human rights obligations.

In July 2017, NWAC submitted a shadow report on United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 80th Session 13 February – 9 March 2012 Geneva, to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD). The report focused on the need for Indigenous women's inclusion in Canada's nation-to-nation framework.

NWAC submitted recommendations to Canada's Third Universal Periodic Review (UPR), focusing on NWAC's exclusion from the nation-to-nation dialogue; Bill S-3 and gender discrimination in the Indian Act; child welfare and Jordan's Principle; and solitary confinement and segregation in October 2017. Many states' recommendations to Canada in the review mirrored NWAC's recommendations. We have followed up on this with a briefing to the European Union and meetings with the Government of Canada on their response to the review.

In March 2018, NWAC attended the 62nd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW), where we participated in several official meetings, co-hosted a side event with the Canadian Labour Congress, engaged with various government representatives and ministers, and made meaningful connections with Indigenous women and organizations from around the world.





NWAC attended the United Nation's Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) in April 2018. At the Permanent Forum, NWAC hosted a side event on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The event was very successful and exceeded the number of expected attendees. The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues also provided a meaningful opportunity to network with Indigenous women and Indigenous organizations to share ideas on how to engage in the future, best practices, cultural knowledge, and current issues that each country faces. NWAC was able to attend important political discussions and events hosted by various governments, including those hosted by the Government of Canada. At these high-level meetings, NWAC brought international awareness to the human rights violations against Indigenous women and girls perpetrated by Canada by using any available opportunity to make political statements during discussions.

In April 2018, NWAC attended the Summit of the Americas in Lima, Peru. The Summit is a very political and high-level forum in which leaders of the Organization of American State (OAS) countries meet to discuss a thematic agenda. At the Summit, NWAC attended an Indigenous Peoples Forum and some of the other official events.

Prior to the official 2018 G7 Summit, NWAC was invited to engage in several consultation and ministerial meetings to provide additional context for ministers attending the forum in April 2018. Some of the topics of engagement were on human trafficking, the National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security, and environment. The opportunity to meet with ministers to discuss important topics was an impactful way to advocate for Indigenous women in an international context.

In April 2018, NWAC met twice with the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women to discuss the many challenges Indigenous women and girls face in Canada. At these meetings, we brought forward pressing issues regarding the human rights violations of Indigenous women and girls in Canada, including the overrepresentation of Indigenous women in prisons, coerced sterilization, human trafficking, and the sex-based discrimination within the Indian Act. After the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women's visit to Canada, she released an end of mission statement where she highlighted some of her findings. Almost all of the issues brought forward by NWAC were noted in the statement.

From February to April of this year, NWAC was also part of several diplomatic exchanges with Indigenous women's organizations and embassies in Bolivia, Brazil, and Peru. During these visits, we engaged in cultural and knowledge exchanges with some of the Indigenous peoples and organizations in Latin America. These types of exchanges give NWAC an opportunity to address the realities of Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples and exchange best practices. They also allow NWAC to build strong relationships and partnerships with grassroots Indigenous women in Latin America, which can later be used as a strong tool for advocating for Indigenous rights internationally.

Languages

There are more than 600 Indigenous languages spoken and understood by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people. The legacy of residential schools and the 60's Scoop forcibly removed children from their homes, families, and communities and placed them in western institutions or with primarily white families who did not speak Indigenous languages. These government-sanctioned programs assimilated Indigenous children into western culture. These policy decisions have had far-reaching impacts on Indigenous languages. Many of these languages are losing speakers at an alarming rate and are becoming endangered or extinct. Understanding this, NWAC worked in collaboration with Canadian Heritage in spring 2018 to conduct engagement sessions on Indigenous language preservation and revitalization, and provide recommendations for the forthcoming legislation.

The majority of languages threatened with disappearing are Indigenous languages. Languages are not only a method of communication but also an intricate system of knowledge central to identity, cultural preservation, worldviews, spirituality, expression and self-determination. Indigenous women and gender-diverse people have especially important roles in language preservation and transmission as teachers in their communities. NWAC is dedicated to the promotion, protection, preservation and revitalization of all Indigenous languages.

Milestones

Completed engagement with NWAC's Board of Directors, several of the PTMAs and online through NWAC social media and networks.

Produced a final report with policy recommendations to inform the forthcoming Indigenous Languages Legislation.

Hosted a documentary screening of the film "Keep Talking" to promote NWACs engagement on languages and highlight the similarities Indigenous people across Turtle Island experience in preserving traditional languages.

"Language revitalization is our responsibility as Indigenous peoples and legislation can help but it's only a part of the overall strategy to achieve a healthy living language."

- Anonymous survey participant

"As a Two-Spirit, Nisawayá'aa woman, I long to become fluent so that I can pass the language on through mentoring youth, writing, music, and art. I want to be able to fulfill roles in ceremony as a Two-Spirit with language so that traditional spaces can be accessible to Two-Spirit, LGBTQ+ people."

- Anonymous survey participant





Legislative Review and Political Advocacy

As of December 2017, NWAC has employed a policy advisor responsible for tracking legislation and reports through the House of Commons and Senate. When analyzing and responding to legislation, this advisor collaborates with the rest of the Policy Unit to flag any bill that:

- ◆ Contains binary language;
- ◆ Is exclusionary to Indigenous peoples and/or Indigenous women specifically;
- ◆ Would have an impact on Indigenous women (directly/indirectly);
- ◆ Does not take into account Indigenous women's specific needs and issues.

If we see a Bill is stagnant but could have an impact on Indigenous peoples or Indigenous women in particular, we get into contact with a House or Senate clerk, or a contact for a sponsor of the Bill, to get information on its progress or we put out an official statement. If a Bill has any of these criteria, we will contact the Standing Committee chosen to create a study regarding the Bill in order to submit, brief and testify.

NWAC reviews any bills that may impact Indigenous people and provides input by conducting culturally relevant, gender-based analysis to determine whether legislation:

- ◆ Adequately reflects the direct and indirect impacts they may have on Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people;
- ◆ Includes rigorous consultation and engagement with Indigenous people and women;
- ◆ Recognizes and reflects the specific concerns of First Nations, Inuit and Métis women, girls, and gender-diverse people; and
- ◆ Aligns with national and international human rights mechanisms and obligations, including the TRC and UNDRIP.

Our advocacy efforts, recommendations, and submission briefs reflect these priorities.

Milestones

In March 2018, NWAC appeared before the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples (APPA) with regards to their study on the New Relationship between Canada and Indigenous Peoples. In 2016, the Liberal Government announced a framework for an overarching strategy to renew its relationship with Indigenous Peoples. This framework has a nation-to-nation basis.

The following recommendations were made by NWAC regarding the main principles of the new relationship:

- ◆ Inclusivity of Indigenous women as leaders and knowledge holders;
- ◆ Respect of self-governance: Indigenous women must be actively involved and take their rights place in self-determination and processes must be developed to ensure that their unique and important roles in Indigenous government be recognized;
- ◆ Policy priorities regarding Indigenous women include: Respect all priorities and diversity of all Indigenous women;
- ◆ The development, implementation and evaluation of all action plans and future processes;
- ◆ Recognize traditional ways and investment in improving the lives of Indigenous women; and
- ◆ Indigenous women must have resources and opportunities to reclaim their traditional governing roles within families, communities and nations.

NWAC appeared before the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs with regards to their study on Bill C-262: An Act to ensure the laws of Canada are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, in April 2018. Member of Parliament Romeo Saganash presented Bill C-262 in April 2016. Mr. Saganash has won the support for this Bill from a range of Indigenous communities, governments, human rights organizations and faith-based groups across Canada, including NWAC. The Bill is a necessary step to move away from the colonial mindset that has influenced federal law, policy and practice for far too long. NWAC is in full support of this Bill and all the implications that come with it.



MMIWG - National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

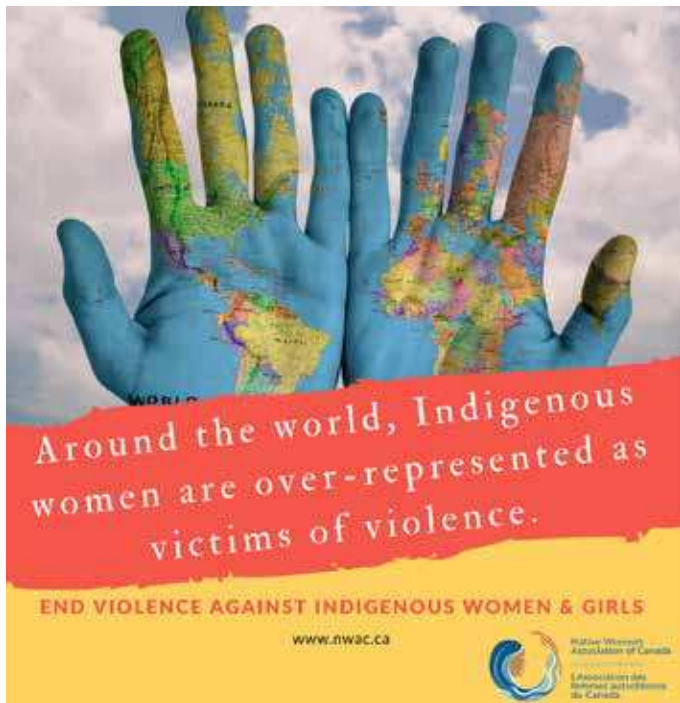
NWAC has standing meetings with the RCMP every two months to discuss initiatives to address violence against women, Indigenous policing and jurisdictional issues, as well as other relevant issues.

In conducting preliminary research on policing issues, NWAC is working to hold policing bodies accountable for violence and discrimination against Indigenous women. NWAC is working with the RCMP to develop initiatives that will reduce violence against Indigenous women and building better relationships between police and Indigenous communities to support victims and survivors of crime and their families. Additionally, NWAC is working to provide gender-based, trauma-informed, cultural sensitivity training and education for police officers and officials.

Milestones

NWAC spoke at the Indigenous Policing Forum happening in Toronto to discuss proactive initiatives, issues related to missing persons' cases, and engagement with Indigenous peoples and communities with input that was largely informed by the testimony of women directly impacted in May 2018.

This summer, NWAC submitted a brief to the new RCMP commissioner on issues concerning Indigenous peoples in Canada to inform the issues concerning Indigenous women, including the gendered context of colonization. We hope for this to serve as part of the relationship building between NWAC and the RCMP, and eventually lead to the possibility of NWAC providing gender-based, culturally-appropriate, and trauma-informed training to RCMP officers.



Poverty Reduction

Indigenous women are more likely to experience poverty because of the dominance of colonial systems and the continuation of societal discrimination based not only on race and gender, but also on class and culture. Social, political, and economic marginalization of Indigenous women limits access to necessary and appropriate supports and services that reduce the impacts of poverty. The most successful methods of combatting poverty are empowering women through increased employment, access to education, access to health care, protection of cultural practices, and socio-economic autonomy. Decades of research around the world proves an important connection between access to culture and poverty reduction.

NWAC conducted consultations through surveys on social media, roundtables with Indigenous women leaders, and roundtables with people with lived experience in the fall of 2017 and produced a final report in winter 2017. The report is available on NWAC's website and was primarily used to inform Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) on the creation of the new Poverty Reduction Strategy. NWAC will continue to work on advising the new strategy. Relatedly, NWAC has been attending several Pay Equity meetings with unions and economic justice organizations to ensure the needs of Indigenous women are being heard and represented in the fight for equity in employment and pay standards. Currently, Indigenous women face the largest pay gap in the country earning 53 cents per \$1.00 a non-Indigenous man earns and 73 cents a non-Indigenous woman earns.

Poverty is much more than lacking a steady or sufficient source of income. Poverty, especially for Indigenous women and gender-diverse people, means being

vulnerable to violence, to the lack of autonomy, and access to services. Poverty is social disconnection, which is why cultural identity and social inclusion are absolutely necessary to poverty reduction. NWAC advocates for the economic, social, cultural, and political empowerment of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people experiencing conditions of poverty, and works to reduce the complex and intersecting barriers they face. Poverty reduction is viewed as a holistic approach, which encompasses several areas of social development including housing, economic independence, health care, and education, among others.

Milestones

Throughout fall 2017, NWAC conducted consultations with Indigenous women and gender-diverse people on access to cultural supports and services and experiences with conditions of poverty. These consultations were conducted through two roundtable engagement sessions in Winnipeg and Toronto, one expert roundtable with NWAC's Board of Directors, and one online survey, which ran for two months.

A final report was produced and submitted with an extensive recommendations section geared towards the forthcoming federal Poverty Reduction Strategy. This report is available in English and French on NWAC's website and details the unique experiences of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis women, girls, and gender-diverse people.

NWAC policy attended a Pay Equity Summit in Ottawa with unions and economic justice organizations to provide a culturally relevant, gender-based analysis and advice to pay equity champions concerning the forthcoming pay equity legislation. NWAC continues to work with these champions on a regular basis.

"My goal is to be able to give back to my First Nation People with my skills, knowledge and experience and defend our rights to be able to have access within our lands and reserves [to the] majority of what is available outside them. Nobody should be obliged to move out to have those basics needs fulfilled"

– Christine, survey participant

"Access and opportunity [to culture] in the city is a challenge compounded by a colonial disconnecting. I need access and opportunity. I need belonging and acceptance as a Métis woman."

– Survey participant



Prison Issues & Decarceration

NWAC has undertaken a range of research initiatives and interventions related to Indigenous women in prisons and solitary confinement, in both a policy and legal capacity. Indigenous women are both over-criminalized and under-protected by police, and while incarcerated, colonial systems of classification result in their over-representation among maximum-security prisoners, and their subsequent lack of access to the few culturally appropriate supports and programs offered by the Correctional Service of Canada. Given this, NWAC has worked with its community partners to produce a number of reports and issue papers on Indigenous women's experience within the legal justice system, all of which are available on our website. This includes our 2012 engagement on the connections between the legacy of residential school, the child welfare system, and the criminalization of Indigenous women, titled *Gender Matters: Building Strength in Reconciliation*.

NWAC advocates on a range of topics within the prisons and decarceration file including the abolition of the practice of solitary confinement; the elimination of the overrepresentation of Indigenous women in prisons and maximum security units; the creation of culturally-appropriate alternatives to incarceration, such as community-based Healing Lodges; and the delivery of culturally-appropriate programs and services to federally-sentenced Indigenous women, including expanding access to cultural practices, spiritual supports, and Elders in prison.

Milestones

NWAC developed a comprehensive backgrounder on solitary confinement, describing the over-representation of Indigenous women in segregation and the impacts of these conditions in October 2017. Recommendations in this work focus on abolishing the practice of solitary confinement and segregation for Indigenous women; capacitating Sections 81 and 84 for the CCRA to reflect their legislative intent; cultural competency training for police officers, judges, and lawyers; and more collaboration with Indigenous communities, Elders, and National Indigenous Organizations on the development of community-based, culturally-appropriate programming that is responsive to the needs of Indigenous women.

In November 2017, NWAC attended a meeting with the Heads of Corrections in Canada, where we reiterated the above priorities surrounding decarceration, and discussed these issues in relation to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action.

In February 2018, NWAC testified before the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women for their study on Indigenous Women in the Federal Justice and Correctional Systems. NWAC highlighted the need to abolish the practice of segregation, utilize sections 81 and 84 of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (community-based healing lodges and release planning), and the need for gender-based, trauma-informed, culturally-appropriate services and alternatives to incarceration.

In March 2018, NWAC completed a gender-based analysis of the Correctional Services of Canada's National Employability Skills Program, a vocational training that women have access to in prison, to ensure materials were both gender-based and culturally-appropriate. We provided many comments and recommendations. NWAC hopes to further this work by working with CSC to create a gender-based, culturally-appropriate, trauma-informed approach to vocational programming and other institutional programs.





COMMUNICATIONS UNIT



A message from the Director of Communications

The Communications Unit works closely with the President's office to build a stronger rapport and presence with the media. As relationships develop, many media agencies now have a better understanding of the issues facing Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people as well as the advocacy work NWAC does. As part of the strategic growth of the Communications Department, we will continue to evolve the media templates we use for distribution of messaging and of media releases. By virtue of including all required media assets to the media, NWAC will improve coverage of our platforms and issues. In addition, Communications continues to provide support by writing biographies, assisting with speech writing and enhancing graphics and visuals for the President's office.

- Director of Communications,
Joël Lamoureux



Over the past year the Communications Unit has transformed by expanding and emphasizing on developing content to provide important materials and content related to all levels of stakeholders. NWAC focuses on pertinent and important content to the day-to-day lives of Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people increasing outreach, availability and accessibility. This includes opportunities, projects or information that positively support grassroots Indigenous women, gender-diverse people, their families and communities. Other media assets are incorporated into the daily creative process including graphically rich digital materials, professional videos and documents, and an enhanced multimedia team.

The goals over the next year will include a strategic development focused on areas such as:

- ◆ Enhanced and consistent external presentation of NWAC branding;
- ◆ Development of a quarterly digital magazine with revenue opportunities;
- ◆ Development of monthly digital President's report for website;
- ◆ Launch of new website;
- ◆ Enhancement of Multimedia in Media Releases and online assets;
- ◆ Development of educational/teaching toolkits on video including story gathering, language preservation, language teaching, traditional teaching, cultural preservation and more;
- ◆ Adding more staff to the Communications Unit;
- ◆ Best practices development within Communications Unit;
- ◆ Extended communications support to PTMAs,
- ◆ 25% growth in Social Media followers;
- ◆ Consolidation and launch of email distribution list / newsletter for external marketing;
- ◆ Communications initiatives to promote new building;
- ◆ Communications initiatives to promote NWAC's new Café and Boutique/Online store;
- ◆ Lead external marketing campaign to increase revenue opportunity;
- ◆ Adoption of cutting edge technology (on site of new building) for media interviews and press gatherings;
- ◆ Assist and support launch of new Indigenous youth website and social media brand;

The current structure of the Communications team includes the Director of Communications, Social Media Officer and Multimedia Specialist. The 2018-2019 growth would like to increase to five staff within Communications Unit.

Bill S3 – The Demystification Project

In Canada, the Indian Act continues to discriminate against Indigenous women, girls, gender-diverse people. NWAC created a video to point a spotlight on this issue and directly ask the Government of Canada if they are in fact, ready to consult with Indigenous peoples in good faith. The video ends by highlighting Indigenous women deserve respect, equality and self-determination. The video directs viewers to the NWAC website for more information on Bill S3.

The Communications Unit not only distributes information to the public, but it also improves accessibility of information as well. For instance, by using a calculated and tactical approach to promote issues related to the Indian Act, the Communications Unit is able to remove barriers to information surrounding this topic. Through a threefold approach, the unit is able to clarify, educate and humanize topics for meaningful engagement throughout its platforms.

1. Clarify – explain what Bill S-3 means to the Indigenous community (demystify)
2. Educate – provide clear and factual bite-sized pieces of information using everyday language
3. Humanize – explain what these changes mean through the lens of those that have experienced it

NWAC on the International Stage

Bolivia & Brazil

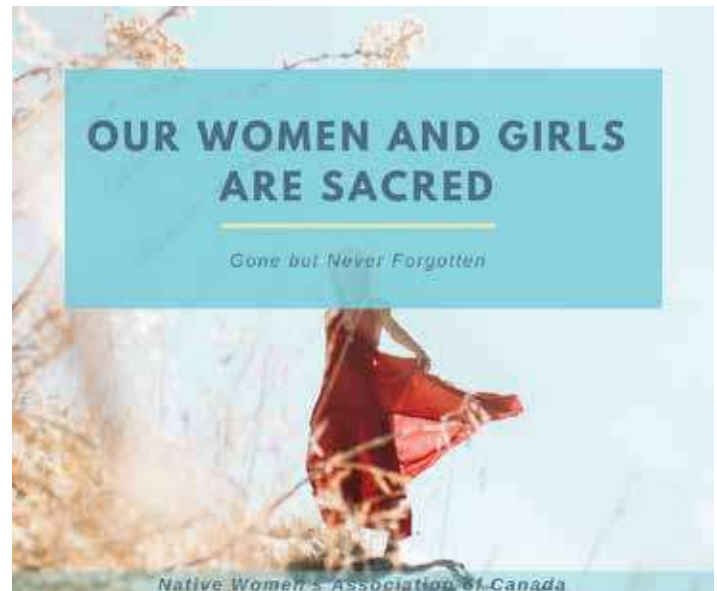
NWAC is quickly becoming a global leader on advocacy for Indigenous women, their rights and gender equality. In 2018, NWAC visited South America on three separate occasions to teach and participate in events related to Indigenous women. This included visits to Bolivia, Brazil and Peru.

NWAC was invited to share knowledge with Indigenous women in those regions building relationships in the process. The Communications Unit created online social media posts to support the initiative and obtained media coverage on these visits.

Summit of the Americas – Peru, South America

The Eighth Summit of the Americas was held on April 13th and 14th, 2018 in Lima, Peru.

The Heads of State and Government of the Americas addressed the central theme of the Summit, “Democratic Governance against Corruption.” The Summits, held every three years, offer the opportunity for the leaders to jointly define a hemispheric agenda at the highest level that addresses urgent challenges and promotes positive change. NWAC attended to participate in the Indigenous Peoples Summit.



Indigenous women from the regions came from long distances to hear NWAC’s messages and teachings. On one particular visit, Indigenous women canoed from deep within the Amazon rainforest for several days to attend. NWAC captured video on a visit to Peru where a large protest broke out demanding equality for Indigenous peoples. United Nations

NWAC appeared at the United Nations in New York, New York on two occasions in 2018. Each time, the Communications Unit developed strong visual campaigns for material distribution and messaging to the international community. The result was standing room only presentation rooms and robust materials to create awareness around initiatives NWAC is working on. These documents were created in English and Spanish to better target the two largest audiences in attendance.

International MMIWG Campaign (Call to Action)

Following the announcement that the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls was granted just six additional months, NWAC decided to bring the crisis message to a broader audience. An international social media campaign was designed sharing strong infographics and messages calling for an end to violence against Indigenous women and girls. These content pieces and videos were shared nationally and internationally on social media.



MMIWG Video

NWAC worked with recording artists TÙ and produced a powerful video related to the missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people. The Métis and Mexican musical duo are twin sisters who created the song in remembrance of a person going through a sudden loss. The Communications Unit worked with TÙ to make a video to educate the public regarding the missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people crisis.

Ten per cent of all missing women in Canada are Indigenous. Around the world, Indigenous women are over represented as victims of violence. Do not let this crisis go unnoticed. Indigenous women are a gift and are valued and loved. Remember our sisters.

Social Media

Successful social media is pivotal to engaging and growing the organization's audience and connecting to all stakeholders and demographics. The increased focus on best practices has paid dividends in NWAC's ability to consistently grow its social media audience by percentages ahead of industry averages.



NWAC is working to tighten the focus on content for social media, target specific goals and outcomes and increase the quality of our scope of work. The result has allowed us to increase our audiences by over 20% in just 6 months. These levels of growth are considered in the 'exceptional' range for audience growth.

Support for Youth

NWAC recognizes our youth are struggling. Mental wellness and letting our youth know they are valued and loved is critical. Following the verdict announcements related to the deaths of Tina Fontaine and Colton Boushie, NWAC proactively reached out to Indigenous youth. The negative, stereotypical and at times racist tones expressed toward Indigenous youth was causing a great deal of pain. NWAC communications created a video of support that was shared both nationally and internationally to express the value and gift our children are.

Indian Act Consultation

Minister Carolyn Bennett of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs announced the launch of consultations on the Indian Act, Indian Registration, Band Membership and First Nation Citizenship. This year-long 'collaboration process' will include information sessions, regional events, online surveys and expert panels. The government will be making funds available directly to First Nations and regions to conduct community-led collaborative process sessions. NWAC will be facilitating grassroots engagement sessions with Indigenous women on the impacts around the Indian Registration, band membership and First Nation citizenship. NWAC also created a video as an awareness piece for this consultation and included information about the impacts of the registration process.

Cultural Teaching

In an effort to achieve ongoing cultural teaching, the Communications Unit will create and share Métis, Inuit and First Nations' cultural teachings. These designs are in full colour with robust and captivating imagery and a message or teaching embedded in short presentation. NWAC is working diligently to grow awareness through teachings and ongoing education. For instance, NWAC produced a video to share one of the Seven Grandfather Teachings. This particular video focused on love.

Media Releases

The evolution of NWAC's media releases are evident. The transition from the old brand into the 2018 edition was a significant step forward to a more pleasing and contemporary feel. The transformation continues making the appearance brighter, more vivid and adding photos. We are continuously working to provide media with complete and convenient content for their newscasts. Next steps will include audio and video delivery that is ready for radio, online and television, which will be completed in-house at NWAC and served directly to media.





Marketing Support for the NWAC Store

As NWAC grows and innovates new ideas and new opportunities, we are also growing and improving the NWAC store. NWAC has successfully increased sales and awareness through the NWAC store. Offering a variety of Indigenous inspired products designed by Indigenous women. We have engaged in specialty sales throughout the last six months. Increased marketing is part of the strategic plan for 2018 and the transition to the new boutique in the NWAC's new home.

Project Support

The quality and volume of work developed at NWAC is growing exponentially. Communications has innovated the unit by incorporating contemporary leading edge software to enhance the presentation of the high quality policy papers, reports, booklets, programs, legislative pieces and educational toolkits. A digital style magazine presentation is one such example that allows for smooth presentation and ease of access.



Internal Communications

As the staff at NWAC has increased by five times over the last 18 months, we needed to adapt our internal communications methods. The Communications Unit created an internal newsletter, which the staff gave high reviews. Inside the monthly newsletter, staff will find inspired messages from the President, Executive Director and the Director of Operations. The document is filled with news stories, updates on operations, photos from events, and educational components with a cultural and gender-based lens. Additionally, ongoing captivating visual announcements are shared regularly regarding new hires, promotions, social gatherings and other positive motivating information. These items are all spearheaded through the Communications Unit.



LOOKING AHEAD

NWAC envisions a future where all Indigenous peoples can develop their talents freely, achieving their full potential and living healthy lifestyles with balance in their spiritual, emotional, mental and physical health.

We see a future where everyone can learn their history and traditional ways. Where our communities can grow and strengthen with all members contributing. We see an Indigenous community that understands and respects the diversity and uniqueness of all Indigenous nations.

All Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people, and their communities, should be proud of who they are and take pride in passing on their culture and heritage to future generations.

Looking ahead, we see an Indigenous community that can co-exist in co-operation with society – free from racism, discrimination and marginalization.



APPENDIX A

Provincial and Territorial Member Associations

Alberta Aboriginal Women's Society

Ruth Kidder, President
9622-84 Ave., Peace River, AB, T8S 1A5

BC Native Women's Association

Anna Thomas, President
144 Briar Ave Kamloops, BC, V2B 1C1

Manitoba Moon Voices Inc.

Thelma Morrissette, Co-Chair
Alaya McIvor, Co-Chair
2-715 Main Street Winnipeg, MB, R3B 3N7

Indigenous Women's Association of the Maliseet and Mi'kmaq Territory

Gail Paul, Interim President
13100 Rte. 105, Tobique First Nation, NB, E7H 3Y2

Newfoundland Native Women's Association

Dorothy George, President
34 Shoreline Rd., Halfway Point, NL, A0L 1A0

The Native Women's Association of the NWT

Liza Pieper, President
4902-50th Avenue, P.O. Box 2321 Yellowknife, NT, X1A 2P7

Nova Scotia Native Women's Association

Lorraine Whitman, President
52 Martin Crescent, Truro, NS, B2N 6N7

Aboriginal Women's Association of PEI

Alma MacDougall, President
312 Sweetgrass Trail (PO Box 145), Lennox Island, Prince Edward Island C0B 1P0

Femmes Autochtones du Québec (FAQ), Quebec Native Women's Association Inc.

Viviane Michel
Business Complex River Band Main Floor, Suite 118 Kahnawake, QC, J0L 1B0

Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation

Judy Hughes, President
102 Langrill Drive, Yorkton, SK, S3N 3M9

Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council

Terri Szabo, President
102-307 Jarvis Street Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 2H3



NOTES

¹ Public Health Agency of Canada (2014), "HIV/AIDS Epi Updates Chapter 8: HIV/AIDS among Aboriginal People in Canada", PHAC, December 2014.

<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/migration/phac-aspc/aids-sida/publication/epi/2010/pdf/ch8-eng.pdf>

² Ibid.

³ Canadian Human Rights Commission, Report on Equality Rights of Aboriginal People (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2013) at page 54, online: Canadian Human Rights Commission http://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/sites/default/files/equality_aboriginal_report.pdf

⁴ "Indigenous women", Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, accessed June 29, 2018. <http://www.caefs.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/FINAL-2015-Fact-Sheet-Indigenous-Women.pdf>

⁵ The Correctional Investigator Canada (2013), Segregation in Canadian Federal Corrections, Ending the Isolation, online: The Correctional Investigator Canada. <http://www.oci-bec.gc.ca/cnt/comm/presentations/presentations20130322-23-eng.aspx>

⁶ Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies "Indigenous women"

⁷ INAC (2017), Post-Secondary Education Review: Overview.

Bibliography

Public Health Agency of Canada (2014), "HIV/AIDS Epi Updates Chapter 8: HIV/AIDS among Aboriginal People in Canada", Public Health Agency of Canada, December 2014. <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/migration/phac-aspc/aids-sida/publication/epi/2010/pdf/ch8-eng.pdf>

Canadian Human Rights Commission, Report on Equality Rights of Aboriginal People (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2013) at page 54, online: Canadian Human Rights Commission http://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/sites/default/files/equality_aboriginal_report.pdf







Native Women's
Association of Canada



L'Association des
femmes autochtones
du Canada