



NATIVE WOMEN'S
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA
L'ASSOCIATION DES FEMMES
AUTOCHTONES DU CANADA

NWAC HOPEFUL WITH FEDERAL BUDGET 2018

February 28, 2018

Ottawa, ON - The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is pleased to see significant focus on Indigenous women in the 2018 federal budget. This budget has committed to investments in critical infrastructure systems, opportunities for women and healthier environments for Indigenous children. NWAC President Francyne Joe stated, "this Government seems to have recognized the immediate and ongoing requirements to improve health care for Indigenous children, living conditions and opportunities for Indigenous women and their communities."

The significant and urgent requirements for a change to Child and Family Services has been acknowledged in this budget. The 1.4 billion dollars allocated to Indigenous Child and Family Services is recognition that these systems are broken and require immediate attention to ensure the protection and safety of Indigenous children. Access to critical health care for First Nation children and overhauling the foster care system is long overdue. These systems are directly responsible for robbing many Indigenous youth of their lives, families, and cultures. Indigenous children aged 0 to 14 are less than 8% of the national population yet, they represent 52% of the children in the foster care system. It is NWAC's hope that the funds are available immediately to begin reunifying children with their mothers, their families and their cultures.

The gender-based expectations of this budget extend to Indigenous women and NWAC is optimistic this investment will further enhance the lives of women and create new opportunities. Equipping our communities with skills, business and job training are essential for success on a pathway to self-sustainability. The 2 billion dollars over five years for skills and job training will provide the knowledge and tools for the innovative ideas of Indigenous women across the country. President Joe stated, "NWAC has seen first hand the success of Indigenous women when given the training and knowledge to flourish with their entrepreneurial ideas. The very successful NWAC initiative, Aboriginal Women in Business Entrepreneurial Network (AWBEN) is one such example of enhancing skills with knowledge and training." Gender-based expectations must extend to Indigenous LGBTQ2S individuals. This budget identifies it will address the historical wrongs of LGBTQ2S individuals in the federal government, but does not mention this particularly vulnerable segment of the Indigenous population.

Ensuring Indigenous women have a safe home environment and protection against violence in the home is a top priority for NWAC. An investment of 5.5 million dollars over two years will allow the Matrimonial Real Property Implementation Support Program to continue. The program was created in 2013 to protect Indigenous women living on reserves in cases where a relationship ended and property division was required. This investment will allow for continued initiatives for safer environments and opportunities for Indigenous women.

We are encouraged that this budget addresses the immediate need to end all long-term boil water advisories and provide clean accessible drinking water for every Indigenous community. The investment of 1.8 billion dollars over five years for clean drinking water and wastewater infrastructure is another huge step in the right direction. As keepers of the water, Indigenous women are an essential part of

providing this basic human need. “We are fully expecting to be part of the discussions with respect to finding sustainable clean drinking water. Many families still cannot bathe with water from their homes because the water irritates their skin. In some communities, babies wiped down with water on a cloth develop rashes on their bodies because the water is toxic. If the water is consumed without first boiling, it could be deadly. These are third world living conditions and NWAC is prepared to work with the Government to ensure these conditions are eradicated forever.”

The additional and significant investments in housing for First Nation, Métis and Inuit, potentially transformative movements towards self-determination, increased support for Residential School survivors, education and the investments that will lead to self-governance, critical medical care and mental health support are very positive. President Joe added, “these investments close some of the gaps for services and infrastructure, but it must be followed with action. We will continue to fight for sustainable change and brighter future for Indigenous women as they lead their communities and families to healthy, happy and fulfilled lives.”

NWAC looks forward to working with the Government of Canada to establish a new Nation-to-Nation relationship that will ensure the voice of Indigenous women is heard and the result is real and positive outcomes for First Nations, Metis and Inuit women across the country.

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The Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC) is founded on the collective goal to enhance, promote, and foster the social, economic, cultural and political well-being of First Nations, Métis and Inuit women. NWAC is an aggregate of thirteen Native women’s organizations from across Canada and was incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1974.

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