

# NWAC

Native Women's Association of Canada

## ANNUAL REPORT



Reclaiming Our Place, Power and Identity

**2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORT**

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Native Women's  
Association of Canada

L'Association des  
femmes autochtones  
du Canada



# NWAC 2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORT

RECLAIMING OUR PLACE, POWER AND IDENTITY



## Mission

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

## Vision

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

## THE NATIONAL VOICE FOR INDIGENOUS WOMEN *SINCE 1974*

**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.**

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

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Lorraine Whitman

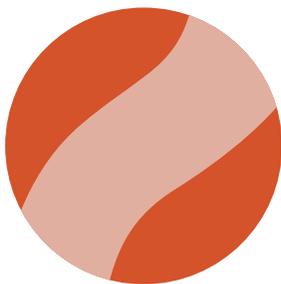


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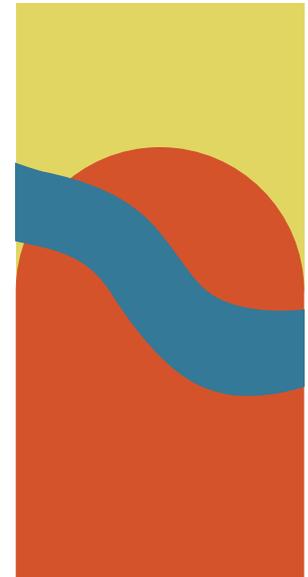
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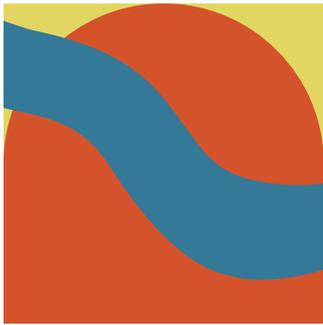
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# Message from THE PRESIDENT

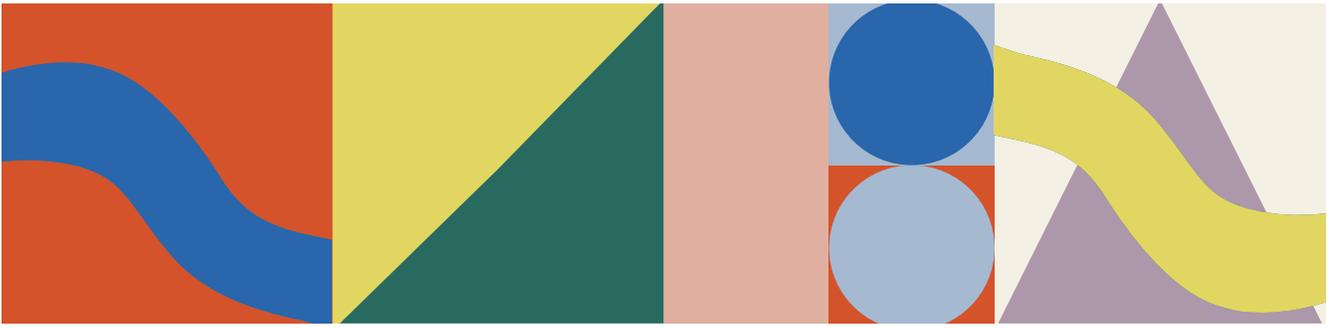
## LORRAINE WHITMAN

From op-eds in major newspapers across the country, to radio and television interviews, to regular news items, the **Native Women's Association of Canada's (NWAC)** message over the past year was clear and decisive. Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people need to reclaim their place, power, and identity. This year, NWAC advocated on the grassroots, national and international levels to ensure the rights of Indigenous women were upheld and their voices were heard.

With the ability to engage across the country virtually, grassroots engagement has grown over the past year. Ensuring the representation of Indigenous women across the country, I engaged with Provincial and Territorial Member Association (PTMAs). I hosted numerous workshops through the Resiliency Lodge where I had the opportunity to engage with Indigenous women in space where healing and togetherness were fostered. When we were able to safely gather in-person again, I travelled to Truro, NS to join the Walk for Survivors and Landyn's Journey of Awareness, raising awareness for those who did not make it home from residential schools, in addition to attending the

*(continued on page 7)*





commemoration mural unveiling in PEI and the commemoration of Every Child Matters Ceremony at the old burial grounds in Fredericton, NB.

At the national level, I advocated for Indigenous women in the media and with government officials. Following the death of Joyce Echaquan, I met with Marc Miller, Minister of Indigenous Services, Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Affairs, and Patty Hadju, Minister of Health, calling for changes in our healthcare system to prevent discrimination against Indigenous women. I also sent letters to numerous government officials, calling for criminal charges against all perpetrators of the Residential School System. I participated in numerous media interviews on a variety of topics, including the support of our first Indigenous Governor General, Mary Simon, and the grieving after thousands of mass graves were uncovered on the grounds of former residential schools. Our national voice is loud, and we are being heard. We will continue this important work advocating nationally for Indigenous women.

Engaging with international governing bodies, including the United Nations (UN) and the Organization of American States (OAS), NWAC worked to ensure

the rights of Indigenous people in Canada were upheld. One of the ways NWAC advocated for Indigenous women on the international stage was by calling for an international investigation by the OAS and UN into the Government of Canada's lack of action in response to the Final Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). This year, I also sent a letter to Pope Francis, asking him to make a formal apology for the Catholic Church's role in the Residential School System and join us on the path to reconciliation.

Advocating for our MMIWG, we engaged at all levels. We engaged in grassroots advocacy after the deaths of Chantel Moore and Joyce Echaquan – preventable deaths that occurred at the hands of systemic discrimination. We spoke out against the Government of Canada's lack of action in their response to the Final Inquiry and released our own Action Plan, a costed plan already in action to end this genocide. We unified our voice across the Americas at NWAC's Summit of the Americas to learn about best practices to end this violence, learning from and supporting each other.

We are proud of all that we accomplished this year in ensuring our voice was heard not just across Canada, but across the world. As we look to future, we will continue to work tirelessly to reclaim the place, power and identity of Indigenous women across the country.

THANK YOU, WELA'LIN

President  
*Lorraine Whitman*

# Message from THE CEO LYNNE GROULX

## WORKING TO RECLAIM OUR VOICE, OUR ECONOMY, AND OUR HEALING PATH

Over the course of the 2020-2021 fiscal year, NWAC has not only been tackling the challenges that were brought on by COVID-19 but has been confronting the systemic issues that lead to social, economic and political marginalization of Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people. By doing so, NWAC is helping to end this systemic violence by supporting Indigenous women in reclaiming their identity and culture, regaining their power, and fostering their well-being.

## RECLAIMING OUR VOICE

Over the past year, it has been more important than ever that Indigenous women and gender-diverse people have their voices heard. Indigenous communities have endured through a pandemic, faced increased violence and exacerbating existing inequalities, and have tired of the lack of government action.

NWAC was fed up too – so we acted immediately. We held the Summit of the Americas on Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls to

hear from experts and community members from across the Americas about their experiences and best practices to end this ongoing genocide. We released our own Action Plan, with costs and actionable items that NWAC has already begun implementing. We called for a search of all residential schools for mass graves and the prosecution of all living perpetrators of violence. We held a huge get-out-the-vote campaign, urging Indigenous women and gender-diverse people to make their voices heard at the polls. This year, our voices have never been louder.

This year, one of the biggest lessons we had to learn was that colonial attitudes continue to impact our ability to be heard at decision-making tables and prevent us from receiving the stable funding we need in order to deliver programs that provide crucial support to Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people.

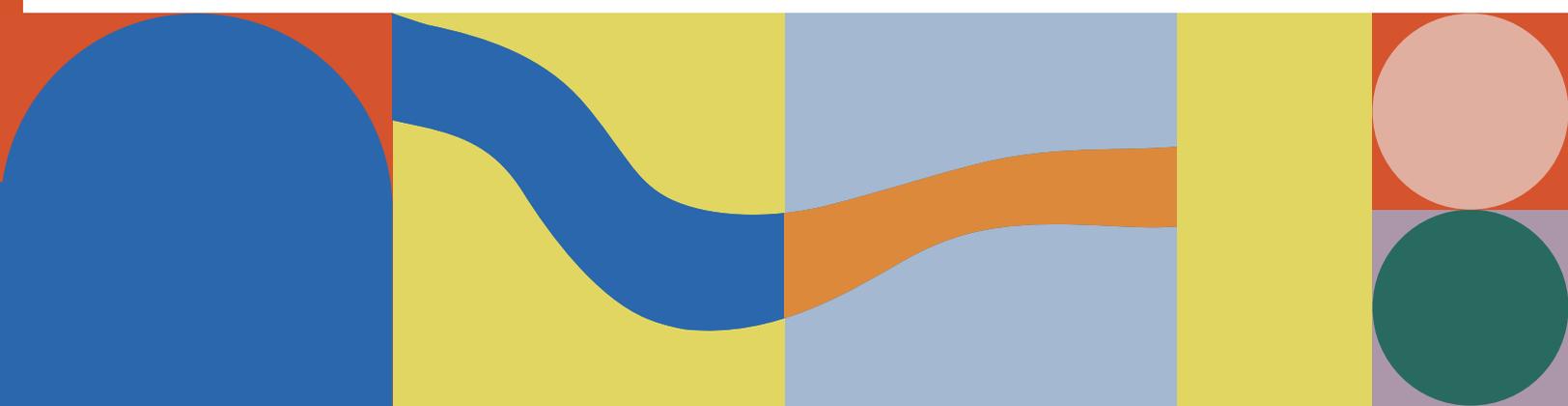
When the federal government failed to address the National Inquiry's 231 Calls for Justice with an actionable and costed National Action Plan, NWAC swiftly developed our own concrete Action Plan based on ongoing engagement sessions we held with our own constituency.



## RECLAIMING OUR ECONOMY

Ensuring economic resiliency for Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people is a top priority when addressing the genocide of MMIWG. In order to support economic resiliency, NWAC provides support through a series of programs including #BeTheDrum and the Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISET) program.

#BeTheDrum, an entrepreneurial outreach and navigation program, was expanded this year to include an Indigenous *(continued on page 9)*



Women's Business Directory. The directory, a first of its kind program, gives Indigenous women and gender-diverse entrepreneurs a change to showcase their business on a national stage. Our ISET program, providing supports such as tuition, living allowance, childcare and job starts, seeks to remove barriers to education and employment and operates in partnership with our grassroots partners. NWAC is thrilled to see the support this program offers, and we are thrilled to see Indigenous women reclaim and build on their economic resiliency.

In order to expand our capacity to provide support to Indigenous women, NWAC has built a Social and Economic Innovation Centre in Gatineau, Quebec. The Centre, which is set to open in late fall 2021, is a 45,000 square foot social and economic development hub housing NWAC's new offices, offering year-round cutting edge policy, research and programming, including youth-specific education, cultural programming, and being home to NWAC's new Indigenous Women in Management Program. The Centre will also have its own revenue generation stream in the form of an exclusive artisan boutique, a catering service operating from our new commercial grade kitchen, a trendy café with an indigenous-infused menu, and the rental of culturally appropriate boardrooms for training and meetings. These revenue-generating activities are being undertaken with the goal of supplementing the insufficient and unstable funding provided by the government of Canada.

## RECLAIMING OUR HEALING PATH

This year, NWAC focused on a new area of growth – providing services for Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people to help them reclaim their path towards healing. In 2020, we opened the doors virtually to our first Resiliency Lodge in Chelsea, Quebec – a ground-breaking, Elder-led healing space for women and gender-diverse people to receive on-line and some in-person healing services. Those service include Elder supports, navigation supports, guided meditation programs, and healing through art expression and informational workshops. This program, the first of its kind in Canada, is led by Indigenous women for Indigenous women.

In early 2021, NWAC purchased a farm property for our second Resiliency Lodge in the Wabanaki Territory (New Brunswick). This property, currently undergoing plans for renovations, will be developed into a land-based healing program with a focus on agriculture. We are excited to offer these programs when the Wabanaki Resiliency Lodge is opened in early 2022. We plan to continue to expand the Resiliency Lodge program, throughout Canada, working with our PTMAs and informed by our Elders.

Through the Resiliency Lodge program we provided online workshops and workshop kits to over 7,000 Indigenous women and gender-diverse people. These workshops are filled with people who are excited to learn a new skill and connect with others. Through bead-

work, jewellery making, moccasin making, and much more, participants found inspiration and were connected to their culture.

NWAC has invested the past year in reclaiming what was taken from us through colonialism.

We will continue to reclaim what was stolen and work tirelessly to grow resiliently. We are just getting started.

In closing, I would like to sincerely thank the NWAC Board of Directors and our PTMAs for their advocacy work during this challenging COVID-19 year. I would also like to thank our staff at NWAC for their hard work and commitment.

MIIGWETCH, THANK YOU,  
MERCI,

CEO

*Lynne Groulx*



# Growing a National Voice FOR INDIGENOUS WOMEN

Over the past year, NWAC's voice on the national stage has continued to grow – advocating for and representing Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people from coast to coast to coast.

Informing our crucial advocacy work are the 13 provincial and territorial member associations (PTMAs) that make up the structure of our organization. Our PTMAs are key to ensuring the work NWAC is doing is consistently representing the concerns and needs of Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people across the country.

Advocacy is at the heart of NWAC's work and is guided by our PTMAs. Together with PTMAs, NWAC uses our platform to raise awareness about the genocide of Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG), support and listen to families of MMIWG, and honour their memory each fall at annual Sisters in Spirit vigils. Together, we call for the human rights of Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people to be acknowledged and honoured – calling for an end to violence, equal access to education, health care, water and employment. Together, we call to end discrimination and racism – speaking loudly against overincarceration, police violence and forced or coerced sterilization.

NWAC also provides support to PTMAs so they can run programs in their province or territory. An example of a program that is partnered with PTMAs is the

Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISET) program. Through ISET funding, PTMAs are able to support Indigenous women and gender-diverse people seek employment through providing access and support to training opportunities.

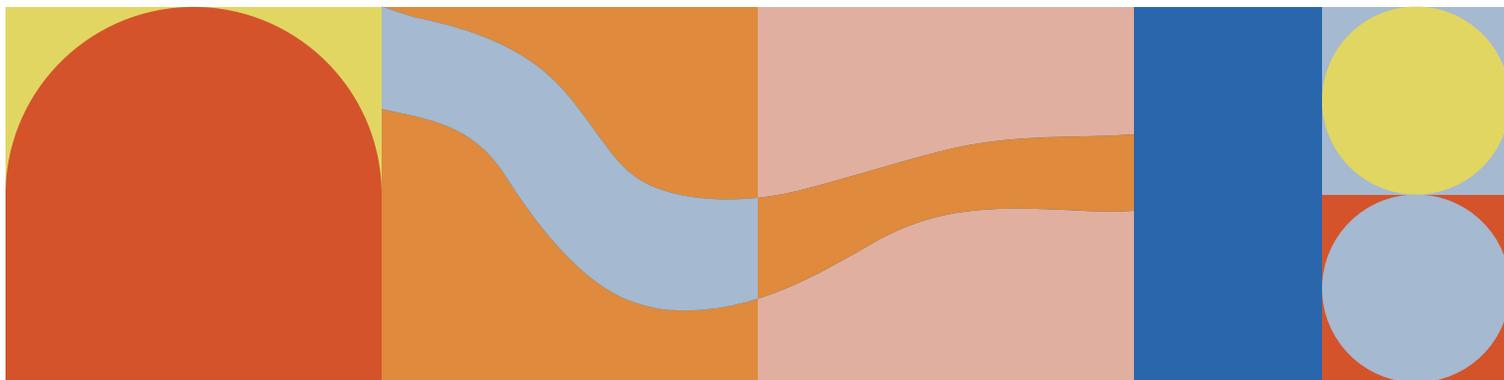
Our PTMAs not only inform the advocacy work NWAC does, ensuring that the voices of Indigenous women are represented on the national stage, but they are also central to the development in establishing crucial healing programs through the Resiliency Lodge that are accessible to Indigenous women across the country.

In 2021, NWAC released our own Action Plan to end the genocide against Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people. A central initiative to this Action Plan is the Resiliency Lodge – an Elder-led, culturally-guided healing program for Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people. With the goal of having a Resiliency Lodge operating in every province and territory, NWAC has been working with PTMAs to develop Resiliency Lodges to deliver essential, Elder-led healing services in their province or territory.

As NWAC continues to grow our voice, we will also continue to listen to and work with our PTMAs to ensure our work is always informed by the needs of Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people.



# Provincial/Territorial Member Associations Help Support INDIGENOUS WOMEN and GENDER-DIVERSE PEOPLE



**The following two examples from the Yukon and Ontario PTMAs illustrate the type of important work being carried out throughout the country to help Indigenous women and gender-diverse people heal, learn, and build resiliency.**

## Yukon PTMA

The Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council (YAWC) has advanced its mission in the Yukon and northern British Columbia in 2020–2021 by empowering Indigenous women, gender-diverse people, and their families through culturally inclusive advocacy, healing, and learning.

We actively collaborated with key partners by sharing information and holding each other accountable for proposed actions that promise to effect positive change on the lives of Indigenous women and their families.

On December 10, 2020, the Yukon Advisory Committee (YAC) on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ people (MMIWG2S+) released the *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's MMIWG2S+ Strategy* to address violence against Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people. Yukon was the first jurisdiction to release a strategy in response to *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*.

YAWC members and staff were actively involved in this collaborative effort since 2015 when YAC

was created to connect the National Inquiry work to families of MMIWG2S+, Indigenous survivors, experts, and communities in the territory, and to guide the first Yukon regional roundtable on the topic. Staff and the board members worked together with 14 First Nation governments, the Council of Yukon First Nations, Yukon Government, AFN's Yukon Regional Chief, municipal governments, and key partners. Yukon's MMIW2S+ Strategy will guide actions in the territory over the next 10 to 15 years.

YAWC began the work on developing the Resiliency Centre concept to support the increasing demand for YAWC services. The Centre will consist of three main components:

- wellness and learning facility in rural Whitehorse, to offer land-based prevention, healing, and training programs for YAWC clientele and their families, As well as transportation services and temporary accommodations for program participants
- main office in downtown Whitehorse, to provide administration oversight to all YAWC programs and services and support to staff, board of

*(continued on page 12)*

## Provincial/Territorial Member Associations (CONTINUED)

directors, walk-in clientele, funders, and sponsors

- hub offices in each of the communities in Yukon and northern B.C., , to offer community clientele the support they need

YAWC is a member of the Local Project Advisory Committee (LPAC) and has been leading the Finding Peace: MMIWG Commemoration Project to leave a lasting memorial to honour the victims and their families. The MMIWG outreach program offers support to about 60 active family members of MMIWG. This fiscal year, we delivered:

- two on-the-land healing camps to families and youth of MMIWG and victims of violence on Champagne/Aishihik First Nation and Ta'an Kwachan Council traditional territories
- three outreach support circles in Whitehorse, Ross River, and Watson Lake with an additional aftercare on-the-land mini circle in Watson Lake

The ISET program helps Indigenous women and gender-diverse people in Yukon gain meaningful and lasting work by increasing their skill levels, increasing employment outcomes, and meeting current client, employer, and consumer needs. Among the training areas offered were the following: nursing, business administration, Indigenous governance, health and safety training, addictions studies, office administration, carpentry, and heavy equipment operator training.

YAWC is also leading the Life Skills to Leadership Employment Training Program research project, which involves developing a competency and mentorship-based training program to help Indigenous women and gender-diverse people in Yukon and northern B.C. build resiliency,

apply the life skills needed to gain meaningful employment, and gain leadership positions in society. The project ends in September 2021.

Many walk-in services closed during the pandemic. YAWC staff developed connections to a range of government and non-profit organizations that could provide information to clients in crisis and in need of supports. We also partnered with the Whitehorse Food Bank to support bagged lunches to vulnerable populations and food for the community backpack program. Our pilot Christmas hamper project saw 60 hampers filled with food, clothes, PPEs, and toiletries distributed to the most vulnerable in Carmacks, Ross River, and Watson Lake.

YAWC is also leading the Medicine from the Land Teaching Module Project to create a tool that will help staff deliver land-based, culturally informed, and relevant healing services to clients. The project was piloted this fiscal year in Tagish by Carcross Tagish First Nation members.

System change is only possible through collaborative work. YAWC staff actively engages in committees such as YAC and LAC, the Community Advisory Board on Homelessness, NWAC's board of directors, and the Yukon Women's Coalition and Together for Safety Working Group.

We partnered with academic groups and experts for a number of our projects, including:

- Resource Development, Violence Against Indigenous Women, & Impact Assessment in Yukon, to build capacity in Yukon to

*(continued on page 13)*

## Provincial & Territorial Member Associations

Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council

The Native Women's Association of the Northwest Territories

Amautiit Nunavut Inuit Women's Association

British Columbia Native Women's Association

Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women (Alberta)

Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation

Manitoba Moon Voices Inc.

Temiskaming Native Women's Support Group (Ontario)

Indigenous Women of the Wabanaki Territories (New Brunswick)

Nova Scotia Native Women's Association

Aboriginal Women's Association of Prince Edward Island

Newfoundland Native Women's Association (Newfoundland and Labrador)

present the perspectives of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people and increase their participation in impact assessment processes by using a gender-based analysis+ approach

- Information and Communication Technology for Indigenous Women project, to create an international partnership of individuals and institutions with expertise in ICTs, gender, communication, and Indigenous ways of knowing

YAWC is also glad to be part of a network of 14 equality-seeking non-government women's organizations whose collective focus is to improve the well-being of women-identified Yukoners across the territory (the Yukon Women's Coalition). YAWC is currently leading the taxi safety education project for the coalition to address issues around safe transportation for all women in Whitehorse.

Many of our YAWC staff and board members are residential school survivors (first, second, and third generation) and have themselves embarked on a healing journey. Lifting each other up, we cannot stress enough how deeply personal our work is, which brings its challenges while also providing meaning to what we do every day.

## Ontario

Keepers of the Circle, the NWAC PTMA for Ontario, had an incredibly successful year in 2020–2021. We completed two major capital projects valued at over \$1.5 million at each of our sites, one in Kirkland Lake and the other in Temiskaming Shores. We also delivered a virtual job fair and a five-week Pathways

to Resilience Job Exploration event, which attracted 175 participants from across Northeastern Ontario. Of the 100 women who signed up, 80% completed the online training.

We entered into several new industry partnerships focused on delivering our Culture, Confidence and Competence pre-employment training program, which was designed by and for Indigenous women. We are a key partner in the establishment of a centre of excellence for the delivery of training in skilled multi-trades. In two years, we expect to have an onsite presence in the facility as well as in the planned residence. We also established a partnership with the Charlton Sustainability Hub to support low-carbon living and food security through foraging and agricultural initiatives.

During the fiscal period, Keepers of the Circle continued to deliver high-quality childcare, family support, and cultural programming for families in our region. We have a partnership with the SickKids Infant Mental Health Program to offer Nurturing the Seed, an Indigenous-designed developmental milestone assessment tool using a storytelling process to help families improve their children's well-being. Through a partnership with Ryerson University, we developed a first-year university course on Indigenous childcare practices.

The work of Keepers of the Circle is focused on securing the political, social, and economic equality of Indigenous women. It is guided by a Council of Wisdom Keepers and supports the well-being of all community members across the lifecycle. Over the past decade,

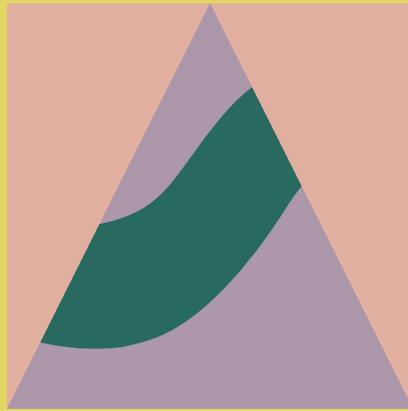
Keepers of the Circle has trained 643 Indigenous women and of those, 76% secured meaningful employment. Housing, food, and economic security are the pathway toward self-determination—and all of our activities support that outcome.

The Keepers of the Circle Training Centre is looking forward to connecting with more Indigenous women across Ontario over the coming year. We anticipate an expanded training program that will allow us to extend our services across the province.



# SECTION 1

## HEALTH and RESILIENCY



# Driving Change FOR A HEALTHY FUTURE

## **By advocating for health equity for Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people, the NWAC's health unit empowers women and promotes a connection to their Indigenous culture**

Despite COVID-19, throughout the year, our health unit participated in health conferences, roundtables, advisory committees, steering committees, and working groups across the country. Forging new connections and partnerships allow us to expand on and conduct meaningful, impactful work. But more importantly, it ensures that the voices of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people are represented and that their experiences are considered throughout the development of various health policies, frameworks, and action plans at the federal/provincial/territorial and global level.

### **Projects, Research and Work**

#### *Walking the RED Path: Re-forging Connections, Empowering Indigenous Women to Heal and Driving Change for a Healthy Future*

RED Path is a five-year Public Health Agency of Canada-funded project that aims to connect with and empower federally incarcerated Indigenous women to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health. Currently, through RED Path, we deliver workshops designed by and for incarcerated Indigenous women in federal correctional institutions. Over the 2020–2021

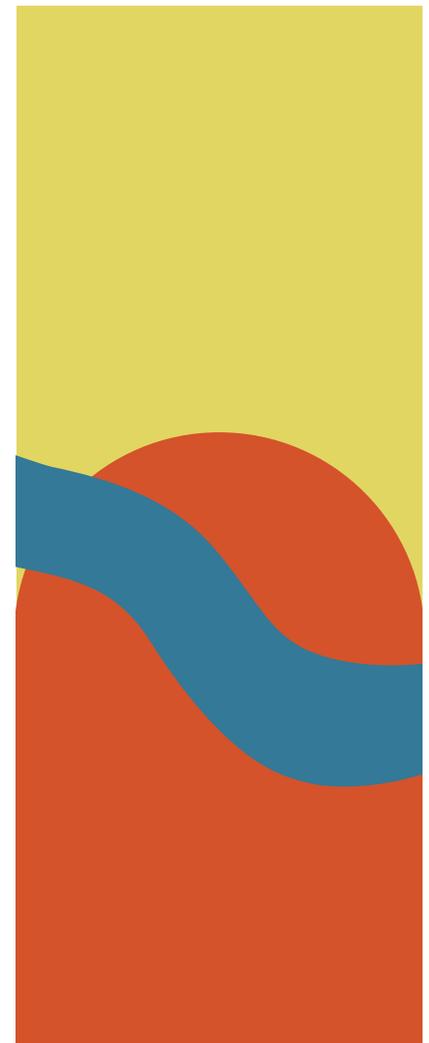
fiscal year, NWAC held 14 workshops with 109 incarcerated Indigenous women and women at risk of incarceration. RED Path has been successful in increasing knowledge of sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections (STBBIs) and empowering Indigenous women to prevent infection, while fighting stigma and promoting a connection to culture.

#### *Community-Informed Approach to Cannabis Public Health Education and Awareness*

The three-year Community-Informed Approach to Cannabis Public Health Education and Awareness project is funded by Health Canada's Substance Use and Addictions Program. Through this project, NWAC is working with urban, rural, and remote Indigenous communities to identify current awareness and priorities of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people in order to develop culturally safe resources. The resources aim to address the needs and priorities of our target audience but, most importantly, develop increased literacy needed to make informed decisions about cannabis use that best suit their circumstances (both as an individual and within a community context) and needs.

Between December 2020 and January 2021, we held eight virtual

community engagement sessions for Métis, Inuit, on-reserve or remote/rural First Nations and off-reserve or urban First Nations groups. Data from these sessions is currently being analyzed and synthesized to develop distinctions-based, community-led public health education resources. *(continued on page 16)*



## Driving Change for a Healthy Future (CONTINUED)

*Trauma-Informed Approach to Culturally Specific and Gender-Based STBBI Interventions for Indigenous Women and Girls*

Through the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB)-funded “Trauma-informed approach to culturally specific and gender-based STBBI interventions for Indigenous women and girls,” NWAC has developed culturally safe, gender-based and trauma-informed STBBI resources for Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people. Our work contributed to a reduction in the disproportionate rates of STBBIs in this population and promoted the need for STBBI prevention, testing, treatment, and care that is culturally relevant and trauma-informed.

Over the 2020–2021 fiscal year, we developed the Culturally Safe and Trauma-Informed Knowledge Hub, which houses resources and information on sexual and reproductive health. The hub aims to empower First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women, girls, and gender-diverse people with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions about issues that impact their sexual and reproductive health, specifically around the prevention and maintenance of sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections. We also published a paper entitled “Applying an Indigenous and Gender-Based Lens to the Exploration of Public Health and Human Rights Implications of COVID-19 in Canadian Correctional Facilities,” which aimed to call specific attention to the health impacts faced by Indigenous women.

*Stigma: An Exploration of Lived Experiences, Understandings, Behaviours of Dementia within Indigenous Communities*

This project focuses on understanding the impact of stigma for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples connected to dementia. This project is funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada. NWAC held three engagement sessions with Indigenous community members and included participants from all four directions (North, South, East, and West). Additionally, an engagement session was held nationally with 12 Elders. A national online survey was offered to gain more insight and understanding of Indigenous experiences about memory loss.

A common theme from these sessions and survey was the need for dementia awareness resources, such as a toolkit and advocacy materials. These recommendations reflect the strong caveat that Indigenous populations in Canada are diverse. Culture is different among First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people and among Indigenous urban, rural, and remote communities. Through continued community engagement, a toolkit and advocacy materials can be tailored to meet the distinct needs of families and communities while noting the intersecting impacts of social determinants of health.

*(continued on page 17)*

## FAST FACTS

- Published three peer-reviewed journal articles
- Developed the Culturally Safe and Trauma-Informed Knowledge Hub, which houses resources and information related to sexual and reproductive health
- Held 14 workshops with 109 incarcerated Indigenous women and women at risk of incarceration
- Held 16 engagement sessions with 194 First Nations, Inuit, and Métis women and gender-diverse people
- Held 12 interviews with 12 Elders and Knowledge Keepers from across Canada
- Held 5 engagement sessions with 75 health care providers including nurses, physicians, nurse practitioners, nursing students, medical students, and allied health professionals
- Published three factsheets, one activity book, four videos, one toolkit, five policy briefs and one strategic plan
- Received 3 successful CIHR grants
- Released 2 surveys with 1,310 responses

### *Supporting a Circle of Care: A Culturally Informed Support Group and Toolkit for Indigenous Caregivers of People Living with Dementia*

“Supporting a Circle of Care” is a four-year project funded through the Public Health Agency of Canada’s Dementia Community Investment Fund. This project aims to optimize the health and well-being of Indigenous people living with dementia and their Indigenous caregivers through the development of a peer support group and an accompanying toolkit.

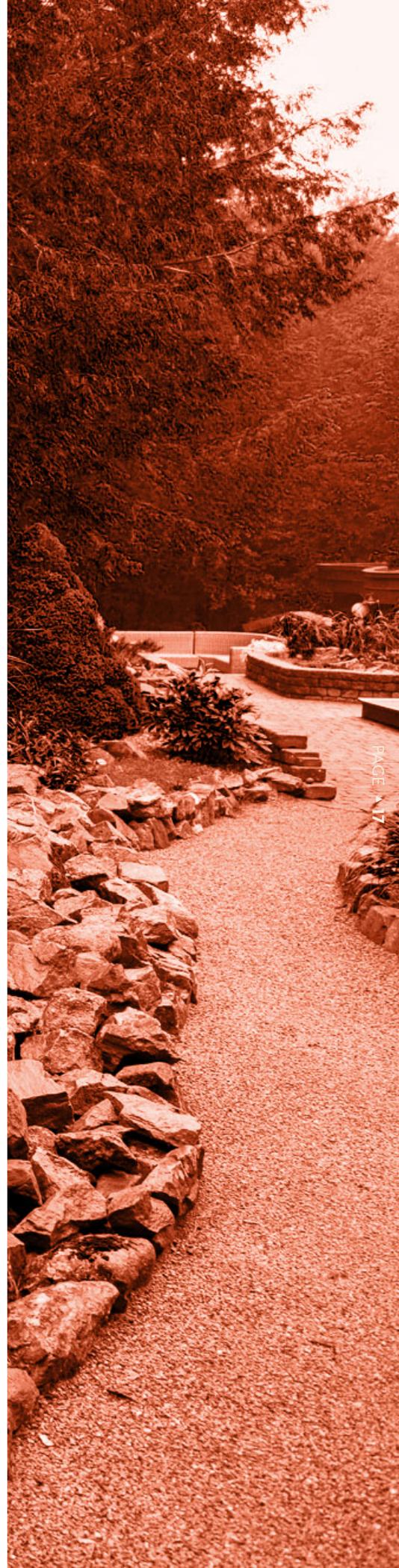
NWAC worked with four rural and remote Indigenous communities, encompassing the four directions, to facilitate the design and development of a culturally safe toolkit and support group for caregivers of people living with dementia. Once implemented, the toolkit and support group will address their unique experiences as caregivers, provide them with the skills needed to improve their mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being, and give them tools on how to manage their loved one’s condition and progression. The support group and toolkit will be versatile, customizable, and adaptable. Communities will be able to refine them to meet their diverse needs.

### *Forced Sterilization*

With funding from FNHIB, NWAC was able to hold engagement sessions with Indigenous women to explore their sexual and

reproductive health needs and priorities. Participants highlighted a gap in sexual health education and a need to empower and raise awareness among Indigenous women on their rights within the health care system, their understanding of their options when it comes to sexual and reproductive health, and what to do when those rights are abused. Further, participants commented on the lack of trust between Indigenous community members and mainstream health services, which leads to a hesitancy to use health care services and, ultimately, poorer health outcomes. Participants stressed the importance of providing training and education for health care providers on cultural safety as well as on informed consent, informed choice, health education for patients of varying literacy levels, and freedom of choice and bodily autonomy.

The Knowing Your Rights Toolkit is a product of these consultations. It synthesizes the experiences and recommendations that were made in response to the recent cases of forced or coerced sterilization of Indigenous women in Canada. In addition to disseminating the toolkit widely in Indigenous communities, we held arts-based workshops designed to both inform and empower. *(continued on page 18)*



## Driving Change for a Healthy Future (CONTINUED)

### *Pathways: Partners for Engagement and Knowledge Exchange (PEKE) Project*

Through PEKE, we strengthened new and existing partnerships in the field of Indigenous health research and developed crucial research infrastructure for the department. We were privileged to sit on the FEAST Learning Institute Planning Committee at McMaster University to help plan a virtual conference centred on Indigenous approaches to STBBI research. We continued to co-lead A SHARED Future's "Advancing Culturally Relevant Gender-Based Analysis in Indigenous Research on Renewable Energy Futures and Health," through NWAC's role as a gender champion, providing expertise on the intersections of gender, colonization, and renewable energy. Additionally, we acted as a partner to the Kahnawake Schools Diabetes Prevention Project team on a CIHR grant to support Indigenous-led research to reverse the increase in diabetes rates and build new relationships with the Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council.

Crucially, the Health Team developed research priorities and department-specific goals. The three-year Health Research Strategic Plan will allow us to coordinate health research more effectively and strategize in the areas of health policy. Furthermore, work has begun on a research toolkit tailored to the challenges and contexts of the health team.

We also secured two successful CIHR grants: one on the impacts of COVID-19 on Elder-led supports for survivors of violence; to the other on cannabis and mental health.



### *Indigenous Maternity Experiences Survey (IMES) Project Summary*

During this 21-22 fiscal year, we worked on Phase 1 of our project work plan, applied for and secured Research Ethics Board approval, conducted community outreach, and recruited participants. We worked with Dr. Leason at the University of Calgary to adapt the project scope and methodology to suit new COVID-19 restrictions, including substantial changes to the research activities from in-person regional sessions to virtual sharing circles. Extensive planning was undertaken for 10 virtual sharing circles on Indigenous maternity experiences for Elders, birth and surrogate parents, Two-Spirit and gender-diverse parents, and birthing partners. We also developed five presentations, interview and facilitation guides, and a comprehensive registration and recruitment process. The virtual engagement sessions will take place in the 2021–2022 fiscal year.

## Greatest Achievements & Impacts

**KNOWING YOUR RIGHTS TOOLKIT:** The toolkit aims to educate and empower Indigenous women and girls on sexual and reproductive health. Community members regularly tell us how impactful and relevant the toolkit is. Women have a better idea of what to do in certain situations and are empowered to stand up for themselves. The toolkit is displayed in clinics, shelters, and community buildings across the country.

**THE RED PATH PROJECT:** NWAC is the only national Indigenous organization in the country working with incarcerated Indigenous women. We have had a very positive and affirming response on our project from inmates and staff alike. In fact, attendance and interest has surpassed our expectations. The RED Path Project has given us the opportunity to build relationships and engage with incarcerated Indigenous women on their knowledge of STBBIs, their perceptions on effective interventions, and gaps in current access to health services.

**PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS:** Over the last year, our department had three articles published in prestigious peer-reviewed journals. The articles highlight our work on Red Path, forced sterilization, and COVID-19 in prisons.

**HEALTH RESEARCH STRATEGIC PLAN:** We developed a three-year plan on how to coordinate health research more effectively and strategize in the areas of health policy.

# A Space to Heal

NWAC'S RESILIENCY LODGES ARE  
OPENING THEIR DOORS



## A space to heal – NWAC's Resiliency Lodges

*The Resiliency Lodge in Chelsea, Que. is in operation and the Lodge in New Brunswick is nearing completion*

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) has created a model for healing that responds to the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous women – a healing lodge that can be replicated across the country.

Called the Resiliency Lodge, the first of these welcoming spaces opened virtually in late 2020 in a forested area of Chelsea, Que. And the second, which will be located on the St. John River in New Brunswick, is expected to be fully operational by the spring of 2022.

It was the Elders who said the only way to repair the wounds left by decades of colonization was to create spaces where those who have been impacted by it can reconnect with their land, their culture, their identity and their spirituality

The Resiliency Lodges are places where NWAC will work on violence prevention in a holistic way. They will have trauma-informed counselling, navigation services, support services, and other services that help women develop their skills and get back in the workplace.

The Resiliency Lodge is a concept that is based in part on a model created in Mexico called Casas de Mujeres after advocates in that country realized mainstream support services were not working for Indigenous women. The Casas are colourful houses located in the centres of more than 30 towns and villages which provide support and services to Indigenous women escaping violence or just sharing common cause and companionship.

The United Nations has endorsed the Casas de Mujeres as a best practice in healing. So NWAC has considered

that concept while adapting it to the Canadian context.

The Lodge in Chelsea is an expansive mid-century building of wood and stone set into the forested hills. It has been fully renovated with rooms reflecting the inclusiveness of First Nations, Inuit and Metis.

There is an indoor pool for water therapy and exercise, as well as a copper bathtub for medicinal baths.

NWAC has refurbished several wood-burning fireplaces for indoor ceremonies. There are many rocking chairs because the rocking motion is therapeutic. The large kitchen is ready for the preparation of healthy and traditional foods.

The Indigenous art that adorns the walls has been collected from across Canada.

### Connection to the Land

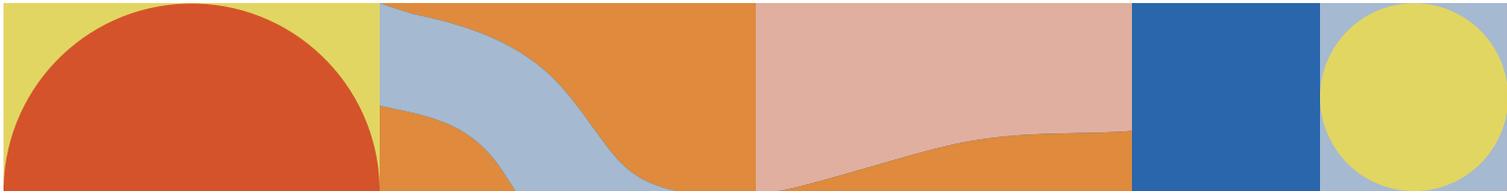
Outside, there is a spirit trail through the woods. It is a path meant for contemplation. Inspirational or commemorative messages have been painted on rocks that line the trail. A red dress hangs from a tree representing and commemorating missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. There is a teepee for gathering or counselling sessions, and an arbour for those who wish to paint or meditate in the forest.

Closer to the house, there is a patio for traditional cooking, a small greenhouse, and a sweat lodge that is just big enough for two people.

Over the garage is what is called the Makers' Space. This is a multi-roomed area that has been furnished with all of the equipment and materials needed to

*(continued on page 21)*





(continued from page 18) create a wide range of artisan crafts, from doll-making to painting to leather and beadwork.

Because of COVID-19, the Resiliency Lodge is running online workshops out of the Maker's Space in which Indigenous women are mailed the materials they need to take part and then join in the sessions via their phones or computers.

More than eight thousand workshop kits have been held since the fall of 2020. They allow Indigenous women to share their experience in a safe place and enjoy social time together, even when COVID makes getting together in person difficult or impossible.

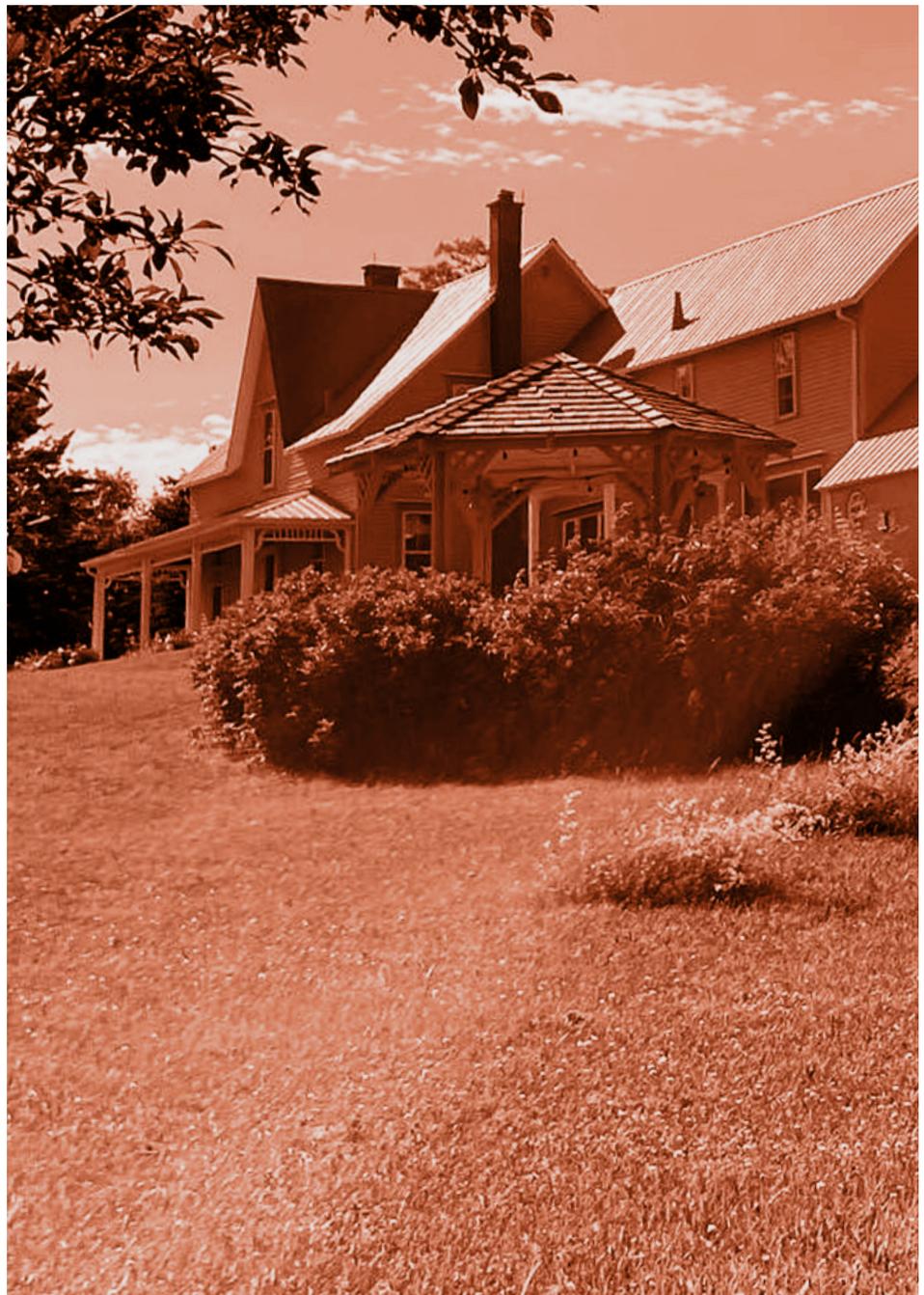
### Elder-Led Support

Elder-led support is a major focus of the Resiliency Lodge and Elder Support lines have been established for women who need urgent support, or just someone to talk through tough situations.

Agricultural and environmental knowledge will be transferred. Outreach and commemoration campaigns will be developed. Indigenous art will be displayed. And courses will be offered that will help Indigenous women gain skills that could become sources of income and lead to their economic independence.

All of this is outlined in Our Calls, Our Actions, the action plan developed by NWAC for addressing the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry. The Resiliency Lodge is at the centre of that plan.

The next step is to build additional lodges in all provinces and territories of Canada.. An older farmhouse, with 16 acres of land, has been purchased on the St. John River in New Brunswick that is to be renovated and expanded to include a gathering space. Once running, the program will be a land-based program, with a specific focus on agriculture.



# NWAC Released Own Action Plan

FOR ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST  
INDIGENOUS WOMEN, GIRLS AND  
GENDER-DIVERSE PEOPLE



# NWAC ACTION PLAN

## NWAC's plan stands in sharp contrast to a government plan that arrived with no funding, no timelines and no measurable goals

Faced with federal inaction, the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) released in the spring of 2020 its own plan for meeting the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

Our Calls, Our Actions is a plan developed by Indigenous women for Indigenous women that has been years in the making. It consists of 65 concrete actions that NWAC will take to address the 231 Calls for Justice issued by the Inquiry Commissioners when they released their final report on June 3, 2019.

The plan, which was released on June 1, responds to demands made by the Indigenous women of Canada for real action to end the violence that continues to be directed against them. It has been endorsed by the former Chief Commissioner of the National Inquiry, Marion Buller. And, most importantly, it responds to calls for action that have come from family members of victims and survivors.

The NWAC plan is fully costed. Its goals are measurable. It will be constantly renewed and updated. And it is aligned with the Inquiry's Calls for Justice.

Two days after the NWAC plan was unveiled, the federal government released the results of work it had done to create the National Action Plan that was mandated by the National Inquiry.

Unfortunately, the government's plan had no devoted funding, timelines, or measurable goals, all of which had been demanded by the National Inquiry. The "action plan" offered by the federal government had no actions in it. It was aspirational and, while it "prioritized" some things, it was mostly a collection of recycled prior announcements.

NWAC leaders determined that the lack of action in the government's action plan constituted a human rights issue because the government has an obligation to end the genocide which was a finding of the National Inquiry.

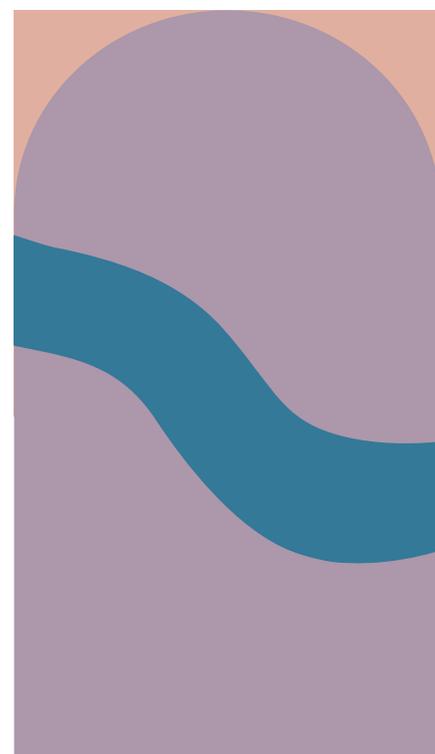
NWAC sent a letter and requested an investigation by the Organization of American States (OAS) and United Nations (UN).

The government created a number of committees made up of Indigenous representatives to provide input to the plan. But NWAC was denied a seat on key working groups where the main ideas for a National Action Plan were formulated. NWAC was not permitted to be part of the First Nations, Métis, Inuit, 2SLGBTQQIA, or Family Survivors Circle committees, even though those committees addressed issues of importance to the very people we represent. That meant NWAC was shut out of the major decision-making processes for creating the plan.

In addition, on the committees that NWAC was permitted to have

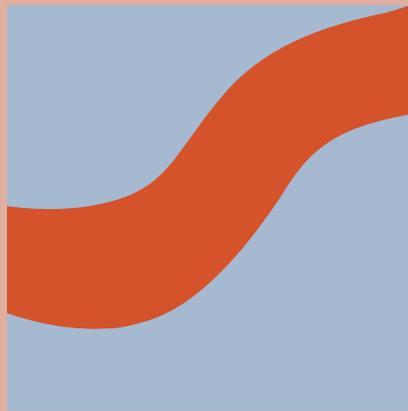
a seat, its representatives were subjected to lateral violence and hostility. That hostility eventually reached levels that forced NWAC to walk away. And finally, although other organizations were supported financially to carry out this work and to meaningfully participate in the National Action Plan process, NWAC was not fully funded.

NWAC intends to move forward co-operatively with different levels of governments, partners, and all Canadians, in enacting Our Calls, Our Actions. NWAC is seeking funding from all levels of government as well as from private donors and foundations.



# SECTION 2

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



and INNOVATION



# Economic Development Programs

## ADDRESS ECONOMIC INSECURITY FROM A RANGE OF FRONTS

### Entrepreneur incubator project empowers entrepreneurs

Since 2012, NWAC has hosted several Aboriginal Women's Business Entrepreneur Network conferences designed to build the skills of Indigenous women entering the sphere of business, management, and entrepreneurship. Among the requests from past participants was for ongoing support in the form of peer mentoring and navigation.

In 2020–2021 we received funding for three years to develop the entrepreneur incubator project, also known as #BetheDrum.

This project provides navigation and support for Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse entrepreneurs by providing advice, connecting them to existing NWAC resources, and directing them to appropriate services and resources in their area. Participants receive one-on-one coaching, access to various workshops, participate in weekly peer support circles and obtain navigation support as needed. A dedicated Facebook group page also connects participants to one another.

In the first year, 2020–2021, the Incubator team held 12 virtual workshops with a total of 176 participants

and two networking events with 60 participants. These sessions were especially helpful during COVID-19 as the virtual forum enabled entrepreneurs to meet fellow entrepreneurs, discuss challenges, learn from each other, and receive support.

Indigenous women entrepreneurs can also sign up for the Indigenous Business Directory to showcase their business and provide contact information.

By the end of March 2021, 148 entrepreneurs were members of #BetheDrum and over 300 Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse had joined the directory.

### Employer training addresses systemic barriers to economic security

The employer training project was a two-year project funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE). The goal was to engage the grassroots community and employers of Indigenous women, non-binary, and Two-Spirit people in developing a training program aimed at removing workplace barriers and thus enhance their economic security.

An engagement strategy was developed to bring the grassroots community, government, and busi-

ness together to discuss systemic barriers to Indigenous women's economic security. Indigenous and trans women, non-binary, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse individuals were invited to share their perspectives and lived experiences on barriers in their workplace. They also discussed solutions and best practices towards creating a more inclusive and safer workplace.

From a high-level environmental scan of existing training, analysis revealed that employer training, materials, and resources for addressing systemic barriers for Indigenous women in the workplace was extremely limited.

The engagement sessions also gave NWAC insight into the barriers faced by Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and gender diverse people—barriers that had not been identified during the environmental scan. This is unsurprising as current training primarily focuses on changing the skills or behaviours of Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people rather than addressing the issues with employers. Moreover, much of the existing literature and training sessions were developed by non-Indigenous organizations. Even when Indigenous peoples were included in the design process, the

*(continued on page 26)*



## Economic Development Programs (CONTINUED)

final training was still developed through a colonial lens. There is also an overall lack of consideration given to gender issues as well as the accessibility needs and experiences of 2SLGBTQQIA people.

From a further gap analysis conducted on the findings from the grassroots community engagement sessions, NWAC was able to highlight the need to develop and deliver training that is culturally appropriate, gender-based, and trauma-informed.

We used the knowledge we gained from these engagement sessions to develop an employer training manual. The six modules make it possible to scale training sessions to the needs of the audience. NWAC tested the manual with members of the grassroots community (Indigenous women and youth, and transwomen, non-binary, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse individuals) and various employers (for example, mining industry, RCMP, Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, Battledowns Agency Tribal Council, and Manitoba Civil Service Commission).

### Makers Space artisan business incubator helps Indigenous women reclaim place and identity

NWAC created online workshops in the fall of 2020 to equip grassroots First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women

with the skills they need to become artisan entrepreneurs. These workshops taught the traditional crafts that many Indigenous women have lost as a result of the residential school system, the Sixties Scoop, and other colonial measures designed to separate them from their culture.

In addition to offering a healing avenue, these workshops inspire budding entrepreneurs, who may then go on to control their own economic destiny.

By the end of April 2021, 36 workshops had been held and over 900 Indigenous women had participated. Each participant was sent a package of workshop materials for their session. Workshop topics covered the making of a range of traditional items such as a doll, a dream catcher, or piece of jewellery.

Among the positive comments were the following: "I was excited to learn something new, and also to hang-out with others"; "teaching me more about my culture and helping me to grow my confidence"; "it's just a hobby for me now, but I would love to make it a source of income once I've mastered it."

Many of the women expressed an interest in turning their traditional skills into a business opportunity. While a market for these traditional items already exists, NWAC is helping to make it grow through

its store. Artisanelle will sell the artisanal work of Indigenous women living in Canada as well as the work of their sisters across the Western continents. *(continued on page 27)*



Resiliency Lodge



### Agriculture grassroots engagement helps to reclaim traditional knowledge

Through our national grassroots agriculture initiative, NWAC encouraged Indigenous women and gender-diverse people to share their traditional and non-traditional agriculture knowledge, experience, best practices, and the barriers to participating in the agriculture and agri-food sector.

A national survey was used to help identify the major geographic zones where Indigenous people are living off the land. The results were used to inform community engagement topics, themes, and presentations on agricultural practice and Indigenous knowledge. These engagement sessions helped NWAC build knowledge on the key concepts and issues affecting Indigenous women in agri-

culture and discuss food security systems across Turtle Island.

Overall, this project has raised awareness of the importance of Indigenous women in agriculture across Canada and helped to springboard an Indigenous initiative to provide support to community gardeners engaged in growing food for the community. Partnerships such as the Clearwater-NWAC partnership and the growth of agripreneurs in the agricultural sector are positive outcomes of our work in this area. Agripreneurs learn about farming and agriculture while being employed (for example, learning about Indigenous plants as foods and the types of gardens that produce successful results). This project has engaged videographers, graphic designers, marketing experts, Elders, horticulture experts, and Knowledge Holders in the promotion and development of

educational materials to enhance the important role of agriculture in the economy.

Other positive outcomes from this project include the creation of a national network of gardeners and agricultural resources, the engagement of Elders and Knowledge Holders in teachings on the land, and the engagement of horticulture experts and family (intergenerational/cultural engagement) in agricultural practice.

Social media platforms such as Facebook have become an integral resource for Indigenous women in agriculture, who access information and share best practices. The Facebook group has attracted 301 active members from rural and remote communities.



### Greenhouse-grown traditional foods help to reclaim identity and place

NWAC is creating an Indigenous rooftop garden and greenhouse on its new building at 120 Promenade du Portage in Hull, Quebec. The garden will incorporate the recommendations made by Indigenous women and Elders to address food insecurity and pass on Indigenous culture and teachings.

Under the guidance of Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers, the rooftop garden will be transformed into a place of healing, reconciliation, and Indigenous culture. It will feature walkways and seating areas among the local plants, be a place to promote traditional agriculture and traditional medicines and promote Indigenous environmental stewardship and a re-connection to nature. *(continued on page 28)*

## Economic Development Programs (CONTINUED)



NWAC will host ceremonies, teachings, and a series of training workshops designed by an Indigenous Elder to teach traditional agriculture methods to Indigenous women, girls, and their families.

The greenhouse will ensure a supply of medicines, herbs, fruits, and vegetables year-round for NWAC's commercial kitchen, programs, and services.

In its additional workshop space in the building, including an industrial-sized kitchen, NWAC will host workshops on a wide range of agricultural and growing topics, such as growing, harvesting, canning/preserving, cooking, or how to make baby food. Storytelling, tradition, history, culture, and education for sustainability will be regular threads in these workshops, so participants can bring this knowledge back to their communities.

A greenhouse advisory board will oversee the project; provide advice on traditional plants, pest management, greenhouse operations, traditional foods and medicines; and

help design workshops. Over the 2020–2021 fiscal year, NWAC held two advisory board meetings and eight workshops. Topics included the beginners guide to gardening, composting, Gete Okosomin (squash) transplanting, mulch and watering, midsummer gardening, the autumnal equinox, traditional medicines, and traditional foods. A cultivation guide, greenhouse-grown traditional food lists, and videos on building a greenhouse and heirloom squash seed transplanting into permaculture gardens were developed.

### **Building capacity for investment readiness partners**

Funded by Employment and Social Development, the goal of this project is to develop a training program on social finance and innovation for Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people, organizations, and communities.

The main outcome from the engagement sessions provided a better understanding of the challenges that Indigenous women face when

it comes to seeking funding. The results of these engagement sessions were used to develop a training program for investment readiness program partners. The first component of the training program focuses on Indigenous cultures and histories in Canada, including the impacts of colonization and assimilation on Indigenous women's entrepreneurship. The second component focuses on the needs of Indigenous women and gender-diverse entrepreneurs, and the strategies that lenders and funders can use to meet these needs.

NWAC also launched a resource manual for employers and service providers that discusses culture, tradition, the effects of colonization, conflict resolution, culturally appropriate language, and the treatment of Indigenous people in the workplace.



# NWAC SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INNOVATION CENTRE OFFERS ECONOMIC RECONCILIATION COMPONENT

Native Women's  
Association of Ca

L'Association des  
femmes autochtes  
du Canada



# NWAC Social and Economic Innovation Centre

“MY VIEW IS THAT RECONCILIATION IS A WAY OF LIFE AND REQUIRES WORK EVERY DAY. RECONCILIATION IS GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER.”

– MARY SIMON, CANADA’S 30TH GOVERNOR GENERAL

Social, cultural and economic innovation are critical tools to help empower Indigenous women, gender-diverse people, and our communities. Giving women the resources they need to achieve economic stability, security, and independence helps to ensure that our communities and Nations thrive. Social and cultural understanding can also be a tool to build understanding.

Social and economic innovation and economic reconciliation is at the heart of the new of NWAC’s new Centre, located at 120 Promenade du Portage in Hull, Quebec, which broke ground on July 12, 2019. Over the 2020–21 fiscal year, NWAC worked on completing the construction of the building and landscaping of the grounds for the one of a kind building anticipated opening in the late fall of 2021.

The project was developed in partnerships with the Bank of Montreal, NWAC’s banking partner, and funding support was provided by federal government departments as well as private donations. Some of the partners include Agriculture Canada, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Employment and Social Development Canada, Heritage Canada, Heritage Canada, TikTok Canada.

When the building opens, NWAC will own, not rent, its national headquarters.

In addition to being an anchor for the organization and providing office space for staff, the Centre will give NWAC financial stability, thanks to a revenue-generation component. Revenue is critically needed to fill in the many gaps in funding needed

to provide front line services to Indigenous women across Canada. The organization is dependent on unstable project funding and despite repeated requests for stable core funding, the organization continues to be chronically underfunded and the government has simply refused to provide it.

The revenues will be generated come from four key streams. Training, Café and catering, NWAC artisan boutique and rental of culturally appropriate board rooms. The Centre’s commercial kitchen will offer an Indigenous-infused menu by catering to government, non-profit, and for-profit organizations.

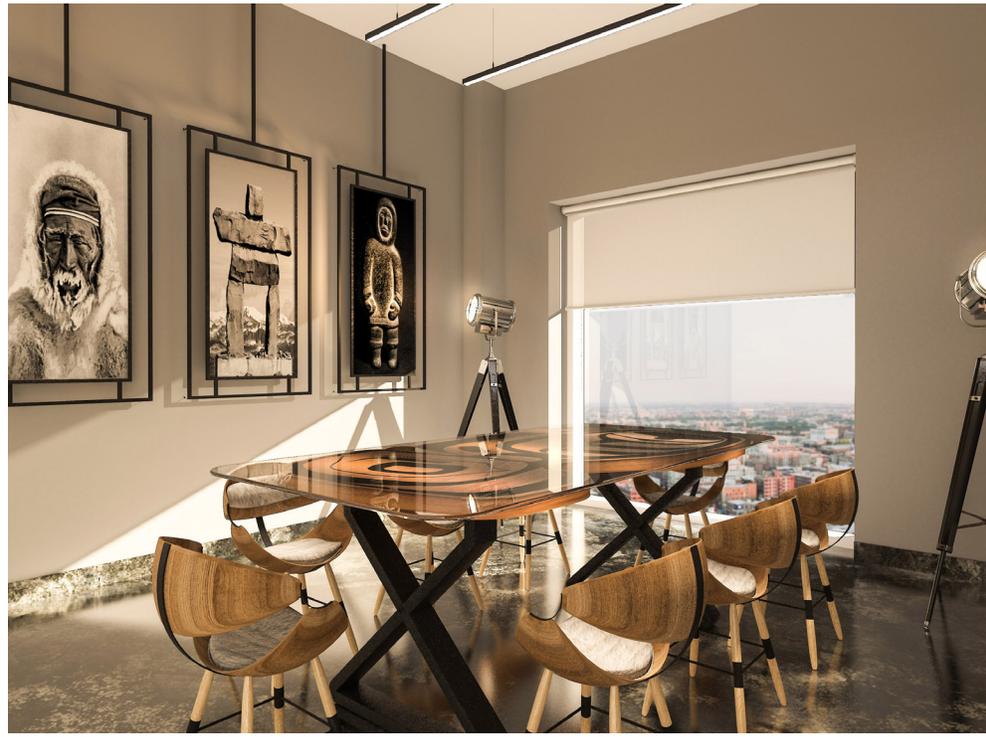
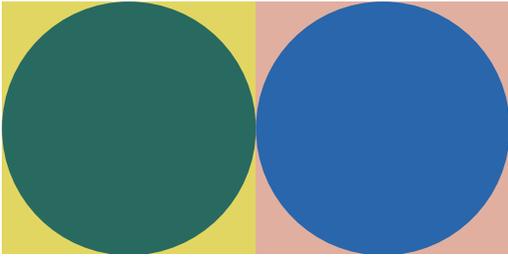
Boardrooms and meeting rooms showcasing First Nations, Métis, and Inuit art will be available for rent; as well, NWAC plans on offering workshops and seminars on Indigenous topics to the public and private sectors.

Artisanelle, NWAC’s retail boutique on the ground floor, will sell unique Indigenous artisan creations made by Indigenous women and gender-diverse people from Canada and the Americas.

The Centre will be a social and economic hub—for NWAC, for the women and gender-diverse people we serve and represent, and for the wider community.

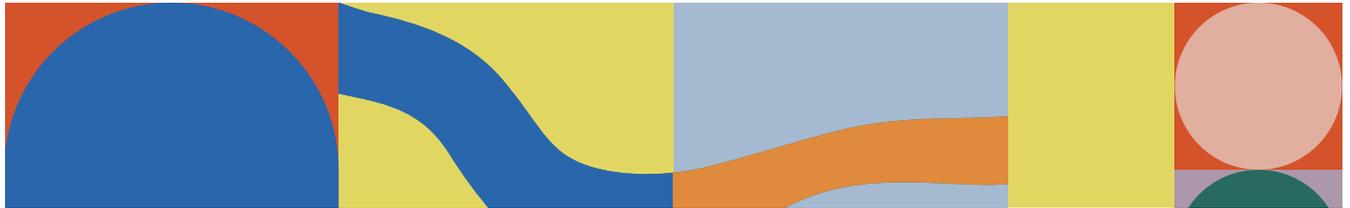
By equipping Indigenous women and gender-diverse people with the tools they need to thrive economically, they can reclaim power, place, and identity.





# Business Development and Social Development Unit Programs and Awards

## DESIGNED TO EMPOWER



### Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISET) Program

**ISET helps Indigenous women and gender-diverse people reach their employment and skills training goals—and reclaim power and place.**

A 10-year agreement for the new Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISET) program was signed April 1, 2019. Funded by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), the ISET program links training and education to labour market demand and ensures that Canada's Indigenous women and gender-diverse people can fully participate in economic opportunities. Through NWAC's agreement with ESDC, we are able to provide supports such as tuition, living allowance, childcare, on-the-job training, and other supports and resources that can help Indigenous women reach their employment and skills training goals.

NWAC provides centralized supports to our provincial and territorial member associations (PTMAs) and regional ISET coordinators to ensure consistency of program delivery and national coverage of the ISET program. Over the past year, due to

COVID-19, the ISET coordinators met virtually for proposal writing training in January 2021, financial training in February 2021, and conflict resolution/lateral violence training in March 2021. Review of client case management, reporting requirements and ARMS (Accountability and Resource Management System) database management, and regular updates were provided to coordinators at monthly coordinator meetings, also held virtually. NWAC also provided one-on-one training to new coordinators from the following Provincial & Territorial Member Associations (PTMAs) in 2020–2021: IAAW, SAWCC, MMVI, IWWT, NNWA, and AWAPEI.

The following below shows the employed and returned to school results and progress over the final year of the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) Contribution Agreement and the first year of the ISET

program. Due to COVID-19, there was a decrease in the success rate (employed and returned to school) in the first year of the ISET program. Many training and education programs were put on hold, postponed, or cancelled and clients could not complete their interventions and/or find employment. *(continued on page 33)*

### NWAC DATABASE RESULTS

#### 2019–2020 ISETP

**Employed: 87**

**Returned to school: 38**

**Total clients funded: 300**

#### 2020–2021 ISETP

**Employed: 37**

**Returned to school: 27**

**Total clients funded: 230**

NWAC and regional ISET coordinators helped 3,153 Indigenous women and gender-diverse individuals access labour market information in 2020-21. We also provided access to computers and faxes, and helped with referrals to other agencies.

Group training projects and number of participants in 2020–2021 include:

- YAWC Industrial Sewing and Parka Making—5 participants
- NWANWT Driver Training—7 participants
- NWANWT First Aide Training—7 participants
- NWANWT WHIMIS—14 participants
- SAWCC Mask Making Self-Employment Training—10 participants
- MMVI Indigenous Women Exploring Business—6 participants
- QNW Women’s Collective Entrepreneurship Project—23 participants
- NSNWA Mask Making Self-employment Training—18 participants
- NSNWA Customized Professional Development—7 participants

NWAC looks forward to continuing to work with each PTMA in the future on this new labour and employment program to help Indigenous women and gender-diverse people achieve economic prosperity.

### Helen Bassett Commemorative Student Award

Each year NWAC awards four Indigenous women the Helen Bassett Commemorative Student Award. This bursary in the amount of \$1,000 helps Indigenous women who are enrolled in post-secondary studies with preference to those studying law and justice. It was made available through the generous donation of Helen Bassett, who was an active supporter of equal rights for Indigenous Peoples and women.

In 2020, the Helen Bassett Commemorative Student Award selection committee received and reviewed over 40 applications. NWAC is pleased to announce four awards for 2020 to the following outstanding women:

- North—Mia Gill
- East—Chakira Young
- South—Jaime Fortin
- West—Bailee Brewster

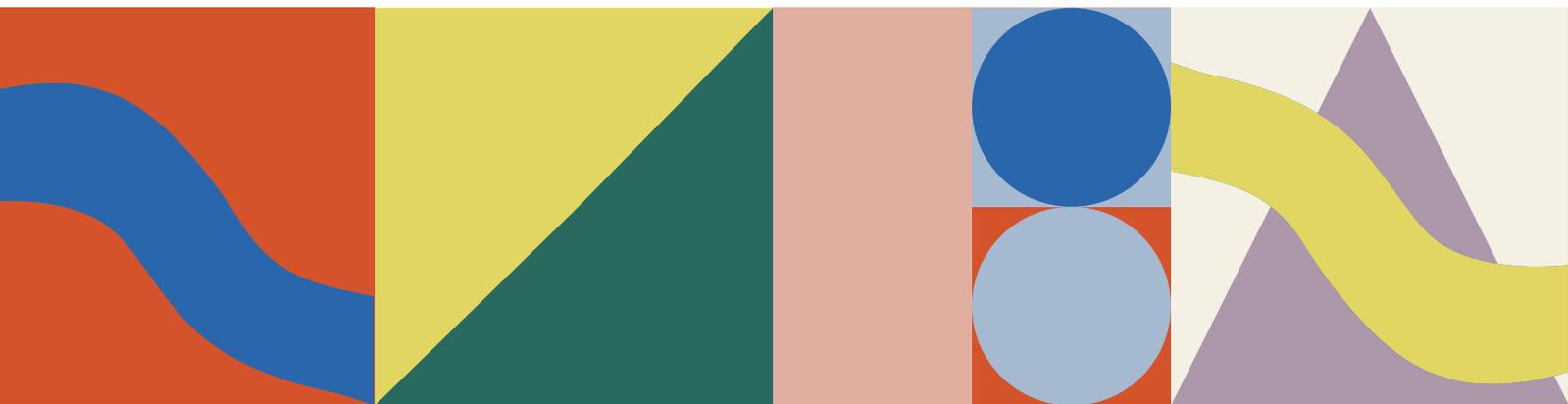
### Michael Melancon-Koffend Commemorative Student Award

New to NWAC in 2020, the Michael Melancon-Koffend Award is prized at \$1,000 and was made possible by the generous donation of Marie Melancon-Ifram. Marie wanted to

honour her late son’s memory by creating a bursary that helps Indigenous women, Two-Spirited, and gender-diverse people enrolled in post-secondary studies. This award is open to all fields of study, with a winner from each province and territory in Canada.

In 2020, NWAC received over 140 applications for the Michael Melancon-Koffend Award and awarded 11 Indigenous women across Canada, with the exception of Yukon and Nunavut (no applications received). But we hope that in 2021 we will be able to award 13 indigenous women, Two-Spirited, or gender-diverse people across Canada. Winners:

- Erica Abel, NWT
- Everlyne Fowler, BC
- Tasia Nateweyes, AB
- Santana Dreaver, SK
- Lindsay Bristow, MB
- Celine Wick, ON
- Hope Metallic, QC
- Samantha Gardiner, NL
- Shyla Augustine, NB
- Jerri Bluecloud, NS
- Ashley Jadis, PEI



“I’M very grateful for the program. I could not have returned to school last year to pursue social work if it wasn’t for ISET.”



“**MAHSI CHO** FOR ALL YOUR HELP. YOU’RE DOING A LOT OF GOOD THINGS FOR INDIGENOUS WOMEN WHO WANT TO GAIN SKILLS/EDUCATION/TRAINING. KEEP UP THE AWESOME WORK.”

*“Thank you for your support and help to continue my education endeavours to become a teacher.”*

# Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (**ISET**) Program

ISET helps Indigenous women and gender-diverse people reach their employment and skills training goals—and reclaim power and place.



# Reclaiming Economic Power THROUGH BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

**Working to ensure the economic well-being of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people in Canada is a primary goal of the Business Development Unit.**

Throughout the year, the Business Development team proactively seeks funding opportunities that match our most accessed services, programs, and advocacy work meets the priorities and needs of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people. Multi-year funding agreements help support services and programs while additional funding allows NWAC to engage with the people we represent and serve, as well as other advocacy groups and partners.

Over the past fiscal year, through our efforts, we secured additional funding to help NWAC adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic and ramp up projects. In 2020–2021, we submitted about 35 proposals to over a dozen funders, with close to half approved. Seven proposals involved scaling up existing programs and services by either increasing available resources or continuing the project beyond the previous agreement end date.

One program/service was the NWAC Resiliency Lodge’s art and healing workshops. Additional funding gave us the ability—and opportunity—to offer more online workshops and healing services, which proved to be a critical resource for hundreds of Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people across the country.

The online art workshops were very popular. With funding support, NWAC was able to send participants their workshop materials for free, integrate traditional language into the teachings, and offer this valuable service regularly throughout the year.

Our Business Development team also secured funding for online Elder-led art and healing workshops targeted specifically to Indigenous 2SLGBTQQIA women, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse survivors of human trafficking. These specialized workshops will begin in the 2021 fiscal year.

Another significant achievement was securing funding for ongoing business mentorship support for Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse entrepreneurs.

At NWAC’s Aboriginal Women’s Entrepreneurship Business Network (AWBEN) yearly conference held from 2012 through to 2019, conference participants told us they needed support throughout the year to apply the skills they learned at the conference. After many years of pursuing ongoing funding, our Business Development team was finally successful. Thanks to multi-year funding for the #BeTheDrum Entrepreneurial Outreach and Navigation Program, we are able to offer one-on-one mentorship, assistance in navigating resources and services, and networking opportunities. NWAC has also created an Indigenous Women’s Business Directory, another resource welcomed by entrepreneurs.

**RESILIENCY LODGE PRESENTS**

OUR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERIES  
FACILITATED BY WANEK HORN-MILLER VIA ZOOM

**MARKETING & PROMOTING YOUR ONLINE BUSINESS**

Marketing and Promoting Your Online Business - Every business has a story to tell - it's what prompts interest and sales. Learn how to tell your story and market your products during this session.

REGISTER BY EMAIL TO:  
**WORKSHOPS@NWAC.CA**

Please include your address (for the mail-out of the package).

**YOUR WORKSHOP KIT INCLUDES**  
medicines for your smudge, a task-writing journal by Indigenous artist Maxine Noel and a bookmark, along with COVID-19 personal care items. (Limit of 1 gift per participant.)

**NO COST**  
Limited to the first 50 Indigenous women and gender diverse people who sign up.

**JUNE 23, 2021 12 PM - 1:30 PM**

**WORKSHOP**

## ECONOMIC RESILIENCY WORKSHOPS HELD IN 2021

Facilitated by **Waneek Horn-Miller** via zoom

Stress Busting Tips

Artisan Jewellers' Networking

Arts & Crafts Artisans' Networking

Accessing Business Financing

Marketing & Promoting Your Online Business

Home-based Business

Business Bookkeeping

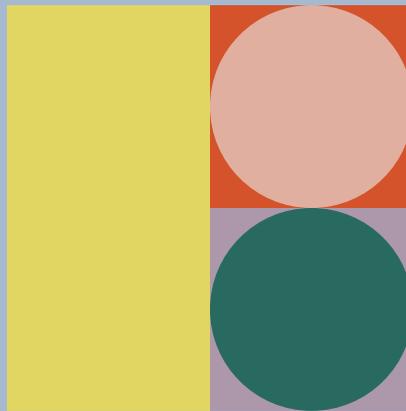
Business & Social Media Tips & Tricks

Business Development & Incubator Program Presents  
DRESS FOR SUCCESS

Self-Confidence & Resilience

# SECTION 3

## LEGAL & INTERNATIONAL



# Helping Indigenous Women, Gender-Diverse People Reclaim THEIR HUMAN, LEGAL, AND LEGISLATIVE RIGHTS

**The Legal Unit's activities focused on three main pillars: legislative and policy reform; environment and natural resources; and litigation. This ongoing work directly relates to helping Indigenous women and gender-diverse people reclaim their rights.**

## RECLAIMING IDENTITY AND POWER THROUGH LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY REFORM

NWAC secured funding for a project to assess the effectiveness of Bill S-3 in removing sex-based discrimination from the registration provisions of the Indian Act and to develop related information resources. However, delays in the provision of detailed contribution agreements and a bifurcated approach to contribution agreements under the project have compromised the delivery process.

After identifying funding opportunities related to legislative amendments to the Fisheries Act brought in under Bill C-68, the Legal Unit submitted a project proposal to undertake engagements, conduct research and analysis, produce information resources, and provide recommendations to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans on gender-based issues related to the fish and fish habitat protection provisions of the Act. (NWAC's Environmental Policy Unit has taken over responsibility for the file.)

The Unit conducted a legal analysis of a government bill (Bill C-15) that would implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in Canada. We also prepared back-

ground materials for the organization's submissions to Parliamentary committees studying the Bill and took an active role in the written and oral submissions to said committees.

We reviewed Indigenous gender-based issues in potential amendments to the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act. Following our review, we raised these issues in discussions with the Department of Justice and included recommendations in follow-up written submissions.

Manitoba's Bill 2 seeks to introduce a Crown immunity clause for the province's refusal to distribute federal funding to Indigenous children in foster care. As a result, the Unit undertook public advocacy activities opposing this clause.

The federal government's Bill C-22 proposes several amendments to the Criminal Code that would eliminate many of the mandatory minimum sentencing provisions. It will also remove restrictions on access to conditional sentencing options that are particularly important for the rehabilitation of Indigenous offenders. While the Unit is preparing background materials for submissions to Parliamentary committees on this proposed legislation, the Bill is moving slowly through the House.

*(continued on page 40)*



## RECLAIMING PLACE CONCERNING THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The Legal Unit has represented NWAC at meetings and negotiations of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change related to the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform since 2018. In 2020–2021, we continued to raise gender-based issues related to the Platform, although our participation was limited to written submissions and video conferences due to COVID-19 restrictions. We advocated for equitable representation of Indigenous women through the Platform, with particular attention to the inclusion of gender-based issues in the activities of the Facilitative Working Group.

The Unit's work on the impact assessment focused on addressing Indigenous gender-based issues related to industrial projects (for example, environmental contamination, sexual violence, workplace discrimination, equality in economic opportunity).

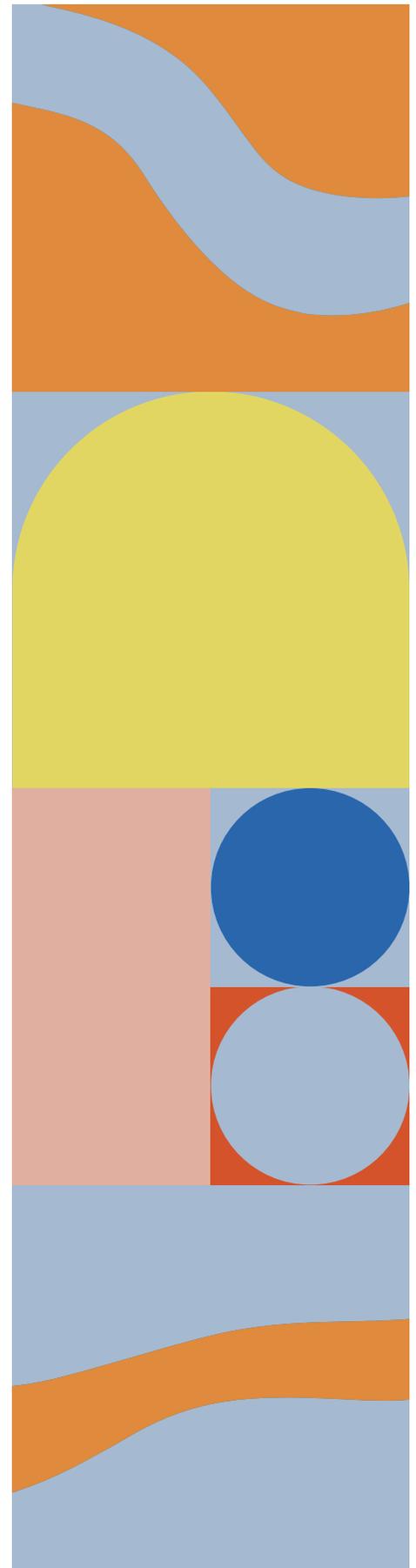
## RECLAIMING POWER THROUGH LITIGATION

The Legal Unit is undertaking research and analysis to determine whether there is sufficient evidence to bring a complaint to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal for discrimination on the basis of sex with respect to the Government of Canada's consultations with Indigenous Peoples.

Following the successful outcome from the Ontario Court of Appeal in the R v Sharma case, at which NWAC

intervened to advocate in support of a finding that the restrictions imposed on access to conditional sentencing options amounted to unconstitutional form of discrimination against Indigenous offenders, the Government of Canada filed an appeal at the Supreme Court of Canada. NWAC has prepared our motion to intervene in the case. The appeal is on hold until September 2021 in order to give Parliament time to pass Bill C-22, which would make the issues in Sharma moot.

NWAC is preparing its application to intervene in the Saskatchewan class action respecting the forced and coerced sterilization of Indigenous women (MRLP v Canada [Sask. Court of Queen's Bench]). Should our application be granted, our interventions will focus on the systemic discrimination against Indigenous women in health care systems and the effects of this discrimination on their lives, families, and communities, as well as on reconciliation processes more broadly.



# Giving Voice—and Power TO INDIGENOUS WOMEN on International Stage



**Luis Almagro,**  
*The Secretary General of the OAS*



**Antonia Urrejola Noguera,**  
*President of the Inter-American  
Commission on Human Rights*



**Francisco Cali Tzay,**  
*UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of  
Indigenous Peoples*

## **International engagement, enacting UNDRIP in Canada, and advancing the WPS agenda all help to reclaim place, power, and identity for Indigenous women in Canada.**

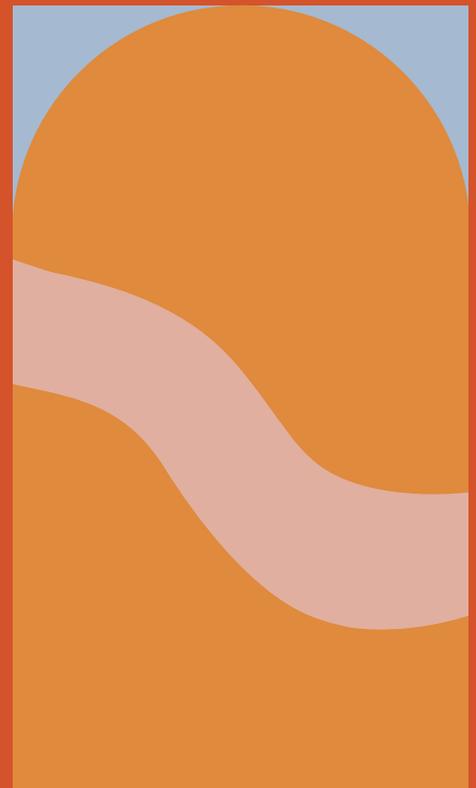
NWAC continues to push for reclaiming place, power and identity for Indigenous women in Canada on the international stage.

Despite the multiple challenges posed by the global COVID-19 pandemic over the last year, we were active internationally. Our commitment to advocating for Indigenous women in this country was highlighted at our own International Summit of the Americas on Violence against Indigenous Women, held on March 29–30, 2021. This high-profile event brought together several hundred Indigenous women from North and South America to discuss strategies and best practices in countering the blight of violence impacting Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse persons across the regions.

Leading United Nations and Organization of American States (OAS) figures delivered keynote presentations during the event, including the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Francisco Cali Tzay. The Secretary General of the OAS, Luis Almagro, and the President of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Antonia Urrejola Noguera, also spoke. Significantly, prominent Indigenous women leaders and activists from countries as diverse as Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay, and the United States also addressed the meeting, bringing a wealth of experiences to the fore.

NWAC anticipates that this meeting will be just the first among several future regional and global exchanges

designed to meet head-on the global scourge of violence against Indigenous women. *(continued on page 42)*



# Giving Voice—and Power—to Indigenous Women on International Stage

(CONTINUED)

## ENGAGING WITH KEY INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS

As a result of the international travel restrictions imposed by the global pandemic, NWAC sought out alternative forms of engagement to give a voice to Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse persons at the international level. In late summer 2020, for example, we organized a series of virtual international meetings between President Lorraine Whitman and key international human rights actors. Such exchanges included the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, and the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

In addition, we also kept in regular contact with individuals involved in the Inter-American human rights system, including Antonia Urrejola Noguera, President of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and its Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

## ENGAGING WITH KEY UN TREATY BODIES

The year 2020 also set the scene for the kick-start of Canada's periodic review by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Even though the formal review of Canada is not scheduled until May 2022 due to delays caused by the global pandemic, there were multiple points in 2020 when NWAC conveyed its human rights concerns about the treatment of Indigenous children to the UN Commit-

tee. Such moments included the submission of shadow-report information in June and directly briefing UN Committee members during an online hearing in October 2020.

Excitingly, in 2020, NWAC embarked upon a new three-year project in relation to Canada's future examination in Geneva by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This project aims to throw a much-needed spotlight on the precarious situation of Indigenous persons with disabilities in the country.

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO UN THEMATIC REPORTS

NWAC also devoted considerable time and effort into making written submissions to different UN thematic studies, several of which were directly related to the global COVID-19 crisis and its negative impact on Indigenous women and girls. These included submissions to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women.

In-depth written contributions were additionally made to the other ongoing thematic studies of leading UN experts. As a case in point, in August 2020, we submitted detailed information to the UN Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls on sexual and reproductive health and rights in situations of crisis. Similarly, in November 2020, we contributed written comments to the UN Independent Expert on Sexual

Orientation and Gender Identity's 2021–2023 Work Plan. Staff also participated in an online consultation the same month. In March 2021, NWAC submitted a comprehensive report to a study by the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on the rights of Indigenous children in the context of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

## ENACTING UNDRIP AT HOME

At the domestic level, NWAC's International and Legal units commented on Bill C-15, An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, during its legislative passage through the two chambers of the Canadian Parliament. In this same connection, the organization commented on an earlier draft of Bill C-15 during a Justice Canada consultation meeting in late October 2020, while President Lorraine Whitman met with Justice Minister David Lametti to discuss draft law in March 2021.

Shortly thereafter, both President Whitman and CEO Lynne Groulx appeared as witnesses before the Standing Committee on Indigenous & Northern Affairs in the House of Commons and the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples in the Senate. After successfully passing through both chambers of Parliament, Bill C-15 was given Royal Assent on June 21, 2021. As such, Canada joins a small handful of growing countries to have adopted UNDRIP in law at the domestic level.

*(continued on page 43)*

## THE WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY AGENDA

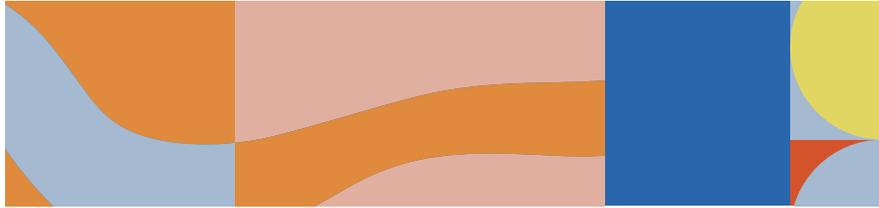
In a year that marked the 20th anniversary of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, NWAC participated in various related events, more so as Canada co-chaired the WPS Agenda Focal Points Network in 2020–2021. We used our presence in the different fora to stress the all-important domestic component to the agenda, namely that the Canadian state should take all steps to counter violence and discrimination against Indigenous women. We also submitted a detailed written submission to Global Affairs Canada’s civil society consultation on its Feminist Foreign Policy, noting the importance of the domestic component of the WPS agenda.

In 2021, President Whitman was invited to join the Selection Committee for the annual WPS Civil Society Leadership Award. This joint federal government/civil society body recognizes the work of individuals, civil society organizations, and networks active at the grassroots level who have made outstanding contributions to advancing the WPS agenda in Canada or in a fragile or conflict-affected state.



# NWAC'S SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

NWAC hosts Summit of the Americas to advocate for the rights of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people—a critical step towards reclaiming power, place, and identity.



**The violence suffered by Indigenous women in Canada is occurring with similar tragic results in every country of the Americas. This knowledge prompted NWAC to call the International Summit of the Americas on Violence Against Indigenous Women.**

The violence suffered by Indigenous women in Canada is occurring with similar tragic results in every country of the Americas. This knowledge prompted NWAC to call the International Summit of the Americas on Violence Against Indigenous Women.

Held virtually from March 29–30, 2021, the Summit gathered human rights experts, academics, law enforcement officials, Indigenous leaders, and women working on the ground in their respective nations together to share ideas and information. Keynote speakers and panelists included:

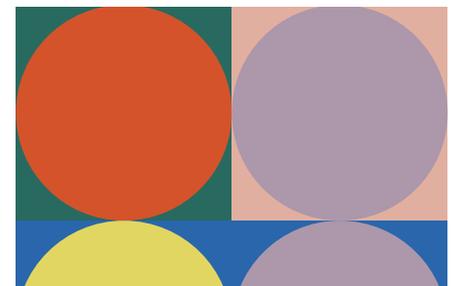
- Marion Buller, Former Chief Commissioner for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
- Jose Francisco Cali Tzay, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Luis Almagro, Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS)

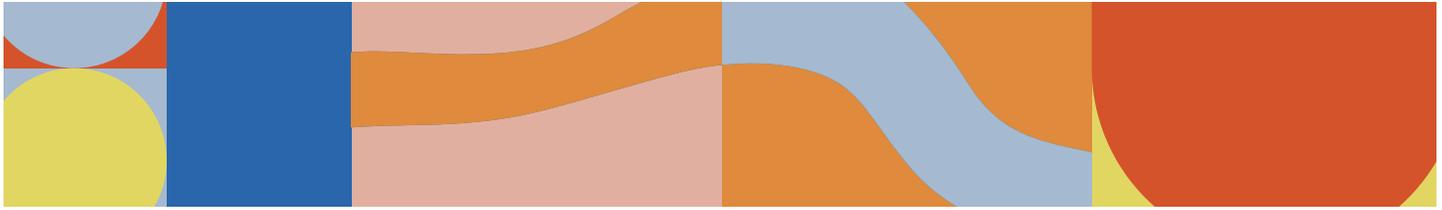
- Nelsy Ku Chay, Coordinator of the Houses of Indigenous and Afro-Mexican Women
- Madonna Thunderhawk, Tribal Liaison for Lakota People's Law Project
- Marize Vieira De Oliveira, President of the Indigenous Association of Maracana
- Anita Bhatia, Executive Director of UN Women

In all, nearly 1,000 people registered to take part in the event, which was intended to be the genesis of an international movement to end the deaths and disappearances of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people.

The Summit ended with the presentation of a draft outcome document by NWAC urging an international response to the crisis. It calls upon Summit participants to, among other things, work together to collect data about violence, collect best prac-

tics for combatting it, condemn states that fail to address violence against Indigenous women, and draw on the knowledge of human rights experts. *(continued on page 45)*





The creation of a pan-Americas working group to explore ways to end this violence was also proposed, along with the following urgent actions:

- to take joint action on behalf of all states and the international community, especially in the context of COVID-19 where all risk factors for violence are heightened
- to collect verifiable numbers across the Americas to demonstrate the size and scope of the problem, which the national inquiry in Canada has determined to be a genocide
- to address multifaceted and complex human rights violations that are reinforcing violence
- to address reproductive violence through forced and coerced sterilization
- to invest in traditional healing methods to help Indigenous women find the balance, harmony, and peace that has been missing from their lives

This Summit helped to kickstart the discussion of violence against Indigenous women on an international stage.

**SILENT NO MORE**

**INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS  
ON VIOLENCE AGAINST INDIGENOUS WOMEN**

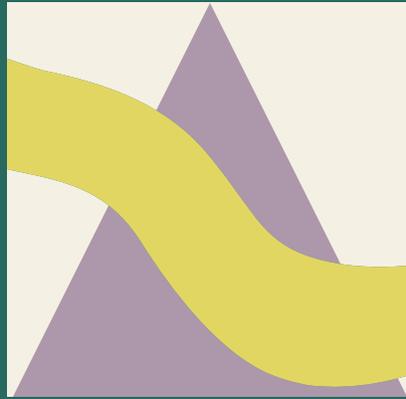
**29 TO 30  
MARCH 2021**

STAY TUNED FOR MORE DETAILS &  
REGISTRATION INFORMATION!

Native Women's  
Association of Canada  
~~~~~  
L'Association des  
femmes autochtones  
du Canada

**nwac.ca**

# SECTION 4



## ENVIRONMENT



# WATER - Main Focus OF THE ENVIRONMENT POLICY TEAM'S WORK

## Reclaiming Indigenous women's special relationship with water ... and identity



The Environment Policy Team invited Indigenous women, gender-diverse, and Two-Spirit people to provide advice to NWAC on conservation, climate change, and biodiversity issues. This fiscal year the focus was primarily on issues related to water, including navigating through waterways, safety within waterways, and the importance of fresh water for humans and all creation.

We provided several reports to government on the critical role that water plays in all life and the importance of understanding the Indigenous worldview. We emphasized the important role that Indigenous Knowledge Holders have in guiding our directions in all our work over the year, and that we have a moral obligation to take care of Mother Earth and water for the next generations. Water and Mother Earth are sources of life—not a commodity for sale and for generating revenue. Excited to be able to gather, share, support, and honour each other, the participants in our engagement sessions all agreed that their voices would be heard when women gather together.

Significant projects included engagement with Elders, Traditional (continued on page 48)

## WATER - Main Focus of the Environment Policy Team's Work (CONTINUED)

Knowledge Holders, Ecological Knowledge Holders, Indigenous academics, Local Knowledge Holders, and grassroots women. Two-eyed seeing—the lens used for our discussions—underscores the fact that Traditional Knowledge is equal to Western science.

Through the Canada Water Agency project, the team developed a comprehensive page on Water in the ECCCO section of NWAC's website. The page highlights the critical role that water plays in all creation on Mother Earth; Water is life! Stories are told by Elders and ceremonies are conducted to acknowledge the spirit of water. Academics talk about two-eyed seeing by combining Indigenous Traditional Knowledge with their studies. Knowledge Holders talk about the Indigenous worldview of water and women's role as water keepers and protectors due to our special relationship with water.

"Thank you so very much. I too believe that women need to support each other, come together, and honour each other through this journey."

Through engagement sessions on our marine safety, Canadian Navigable Waters Act, and fish and fish habitat protection projects, several important themes emerged:

- It is imperative that the right people be at the government tables, not only political people. There is a need to have Knowledge Holders, including Ecological Knowledge Holders, Traditional Knowledge holders, and Local Knowledge

Holders at the table to share their wisdom and stories.

- Cruise ships bring pollution, invasive species, and garbage to the waters.
- Large ships are a threat to the safety of women, who face racism, sexism, violence, and human trafficking.
- Large ships are a threat to water beings (during Covid-19, there was less water traffic and, consequently, whale strikes decreased).
- Young Indigenous women entering science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields need increased support programs and encouragement to enter a career path in biology, the natural sciences, and the environment.
- Climate change and biodiversity loss is evident in communities and in our water systems, and critical habitat is being lost to development.

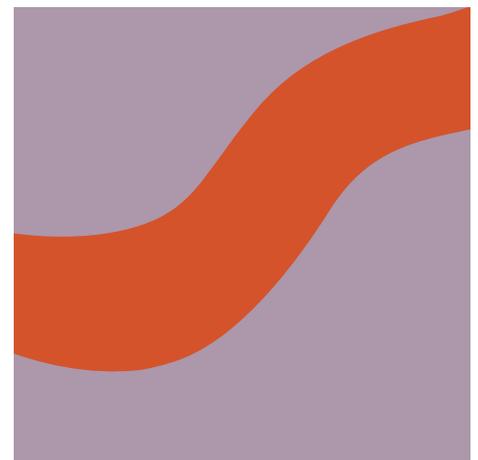
For our biodiversity project, staff attended national and international meetings on biodiversity, conservation, and climate change. One of our recommendations made it into the wording for the Canadian position paper, which was presented by the Canadian delegation at the United Nations meeting on biodiversity.

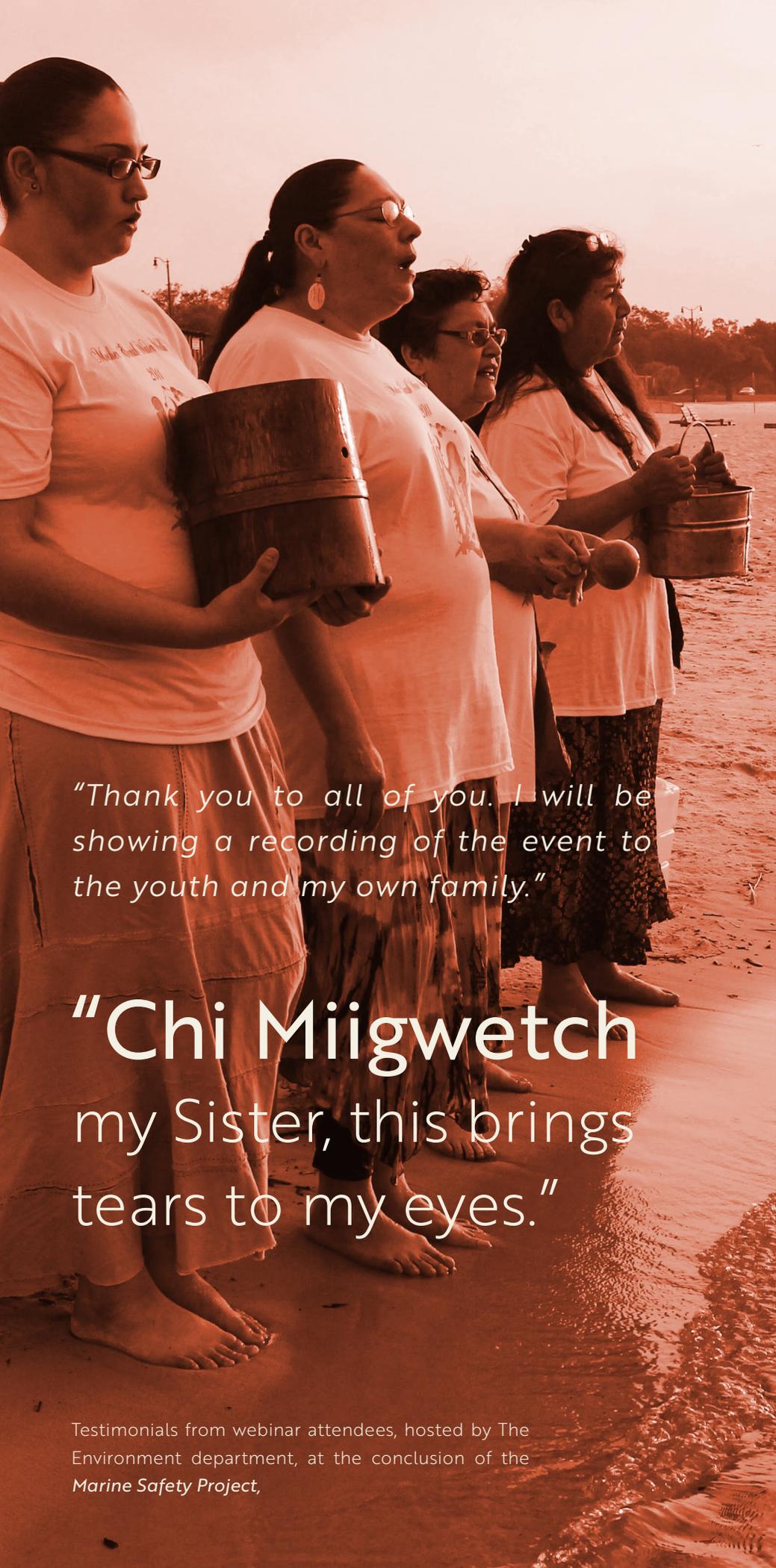
With funding from NWAC's Environment Conservation and Climate Change Office (ECCCO), our depart-

ment was able to hire an Indigenous Mentor and two Indigenous Engagement Coordinators. This past year we also developed a newsletter highlighting water beings and updated the toolkits and resources section of the ECCCO webpage.

Our team investigated the link between the lack of housing and the prevention of reunification of Indigenous families. The results from a survey we sent out indicate that a majority of Indigenous women were prevented from reuniting with family members due to lack of available housing. This issue is linked to rigid housing regulations and practices followed by social service authorities across Canada.

The Environment department hosted a webinar at the conclusion of the marine safety project, which attracted 140 Indigenous participants from across the country. Everyone enjoyed the webinar and all indicated they would attend another one. We also learned that for 78% of the attendees, over half of the information was new to them.





*"Thank you to all of you. I will be showing a recording of the event to the youth and my own family."*

**"Chi Miigwetch**  
my Sister, this brings  
tears to my eyes."

Testimonials from webinar attendees, hosted by The Environment department, at the conclusion of the *Marine Safety Project*,

## Environment Policy Work **BY THE NUMBERS**

Effectively delivered all requirements for **7 projects**

Produced **7 reports** for the government

Hosted **engagement** sessions with **91** Indigenous women

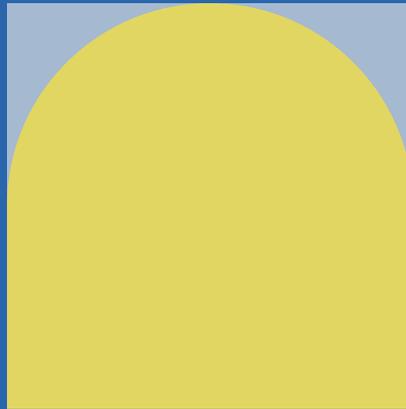
**140** Indigenous women **attended our webinar**

**109** Indigenous women **responded** to a **housing survey**

Hosted **8 engagement sessions**

# SECTION 5

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



# Social Development Policy Unit

Focuses on Improving Lives of Indigenous Women, Youth, and Gender-Diverse People



## Reducing barriers, applying a gender-based lens, supporting entrepreneurs, and including youth all designed to help Indigenous women and gender-diverse people reclaim place.

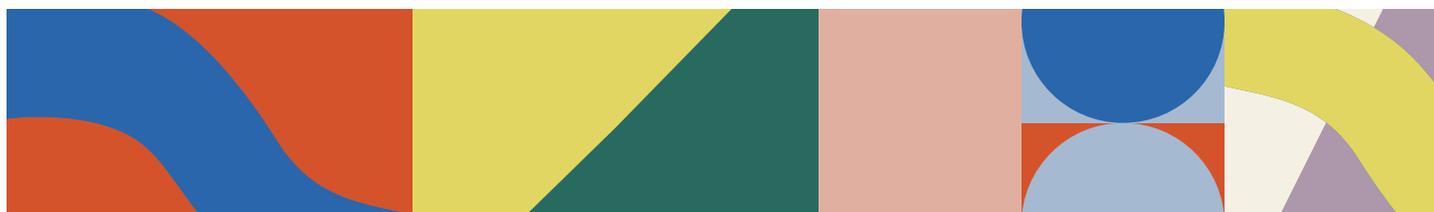
The Social Development Policy Unit worked on six projects in 2020–2021. These included policy areas related to improving the lives of 2SLGBTQIA Indigenous people with lived experience of gender-based violence in the housing and shelter sector; a gender advocacy project for youth; improving the lives of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people with disabilities; NWAC’s culturally relevant gender based analysis; the impacts of COVID-19 on Indigenous women entrepreneurs; and labour legislation aimed at improving the experiences of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people in federally regulated workplaces.

### ‘RESTORING THE CIRCLE’ TRAINING

With funding from Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE), NWAC developed a three-hour online training for service providers working in housing and shelter service settings. This training introduces learners to the ways in which both Indigenous and non-Indigenous service providers can better support Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ survivors of gender-based violence. Support includes recognizing Indigenous Peoples’ cultural strengths and diversity across the spectrum of sexuality and gender identity; seeing the connections between gender-based violence and colonial violence; and recognizing diversity and distinctions among and between Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island and Inuit Nunangat when employing intersectional approaches.

The training, called “Restoring the Circle,” encourages service providers to connect and find common ground with Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ clients by listening differently. This means valuing Indigenous ways of knowing and Indigenous Peoples’ perspectives, bearing witness to the stories and trauma of Indigenous Peoples, and learning to be accountable to those who tell their stories.

The project began with an online survey in May 2020 that asked about the service needs of Indigenous 2SLGBTQ people with lived experience of gender-based violence (GBV), the barriers and gaps they encounter while accessing these services, and their recommendations on how to improve these services. This survey was created in English and *(continued on page 52)*



French, and was promoted on NWAC's Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter platforms. NWAC staff also promoted the survey through outreach to 2SLGBTQ organizations across the country.

NWAC then held eight trauma-informed regional engagements (completed by August 2020) with Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ GBV survivors to learn more about their experiences and to co-develop a set of potential interventions and solutions. A virtual national gathering was held on September 15 and 16, 2020 (two 1.5-hour gatherings) to review the results of our national survey and regional engagement sessions, and to work together on training recommendations. NWAC also developed a needs assessment to determine the needs of service providers, which informed our decision to create an online, self-led training. Following the recommendation to include 2SLGBTQ+ survivors in the training development stages (rather than merely pilot testing), NWAC hired a Two-Spirit Elder and Two-Spirit Knowledge Keeper (both of whom participated in the national gathering) to help develop the training materials. Content has been collaboratively written, with illustrations provided by an Indigenous design agency.

NWAC staff, the curriculum developer, and Two-Spirit contributors have been meeting weekly since December to ensure the training adequately addresses service needs and gaps. NWAC pilot-tested the training with service providers in March and are on track to launch the training this summer.

### GENERATION 4 EQUALITY PLATFORM

Our four-year Youth Engagement on Gender Equality project is funded by WAGE and involves developing a communications and engagement strategy, including a bilingual online networking platform called "Generation 4 Equality" (G4E). The platform links Indigenous young women, girls, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse youth from across the country to support and develop youth leaders. The G4E site includes the option for youth to upload stories, photos, and videos of how they are advocating for gender equality and gender diversity. In the early months of 2020, a national survey was conducted to determine gaps and focal areas for our online networking platform. NWAC pilot-tested the site in March with Indigenous youth from across the country, with members of NWAC's Youth Council leading the pilot test sessions. Once the G4E site has been fully updated to reflect all the recommendations made in the four engagement sessions, NWAC's team launched the site with a social media engagement and outreach strategy.

NWAC are currently hired an Indigenous Youth Social Media Coordinator to lead this work. Our focus on social media is timely, considering the rise of Tik Tok and Instagram since March 2020 as key platforms for Indigenous youth to connect to one another despite lockdowns and physical distancing.

### INCLUSION WITHOUT ASSIMILATION

NWAC also worked on a project to assist in the development of an implementation process for the Accessible Canada Act (ACA) that more directly addresses the intersectionality of barriers experienced by Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse persons in Canada. Our proposal to Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) included engagement sessions, an online survey, and a position paper. In Year 1 (2019), NWAC held an engagement session with Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people, Elders, and youth to discuss the ACA, and experiences and concerns regarding accessibility of federally regulated programs and services. NWAC developed an online survey based on themes from the engagement session, surveying Indigenous women on the same topics to increase the size of our data set. A second engagement session was held in Year 2, but this time NWAC expanded on themes from the year 1 engagement (for example, ideal forms of collaboration between the federal government and grassroots initiatives) and focused on key intersectional concerns regarding the ACA. NWAC developed a position paper using the results of these two engagement sessions and national survey. *(continued on page 53)*



## Social Development Policy Unit - Improving Lives (CONTINUED)

The final recommendations made in our position paper provide decisive next steps, rooted in a CRGBA+ framework, for implementation of the legislation. The position paper puts forward seven key recommendations for advancing a culturally appropriate implementation. Emergent themes used to inform these seven recommendations are derived from survey data and engagement session data that articulate the lived experiences of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people across Turtle Island. NWAC have submitted a new proposal to continue our policy work in this area.

### CULTURALLY RELEVANT GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS (CRGBA)

The CRGBA framework is at the foundation of NWAC's work. It informs NWAC's policy projects, external advocacy, and research. By employing a culturally relevant gender-based analysis, NWAC ensure our advocacy is rooted within our collective vision: "an inclusive world that understands and respects the diversity and uniqueness of all Indigenous women and families." Developed in response to gaps in traditional GBA+, NWAC's CRGBA framework draws attention to the specific cultural, historical, and intersecting aspects of identity among Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and/or gender-diverse people. Since its initial development in 2007, the framework has evolved to reflect new data and best practices.

CRGBA comprises the following five key concepts: distinctions-based, intersectional, gender-diverse, Indigenous knowledge, and trauma-informed.

NWAC received two-year project funding from the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB) to increase internal capacity around the CRGBA framework, and to ensure health research and other policy projects are informed by a CRGBA lens. To meet this deliverable, the CRGBA Policy Advisor and Social Development Unit are working to finalize the framework and create a set of tools for NWAC staff and external stakeholders.

### BOOSTING INDIGENOUS ECONOMIES

The Boosting Indigenous Economies project will support Indigenous Services Canada's goals in assessing and rebooting Indigenous economies with a strong emphasis on Indigenous women and gender-diverse people, as NWAC know Indigenous women have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The project has two main objectives: 1) assess the impact of COVID-19 on Indigenous economies with a focus on existing businesses owned by Indigenous women and gender-diverse people; and 2) provide recommendations on measures to boost Indigenous economies, with a focus on Indigenous women and gender-diverse people.

NWAC first conducted a needs assessment by reviewing pre-existing data and literature about Indigenous women and gender-diverse business owners and entrepreneurs in Canada for thematic gaps. NWAC then facilitated two webinars, held on February 18 and February 23, 2021, to examine how to reboot Indigenous economies and grow existing businesses. The webinars were targeted to Indigenous women and gender-diverse business owners and entrepreneurs. A

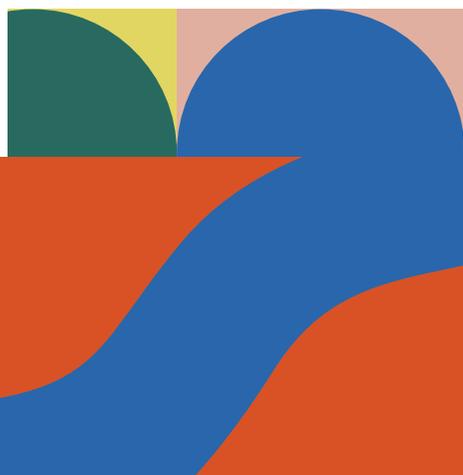
survey of 823 women and gender-diverse Indigenous entrepreneurs, which includes 10 in-depth interviews with women and gender diverse Indigenous entrepreneurs, between February 26 and March 31, 2021, followed.

The webinars and national survey resulted in the development of 12 key findings related to the impact of COVID-19, views on entrepreneurship, and possible solutions to mitigate negative impacts. Respondents most often noted financial support programs via grant funding and financial aid that should continue beyond the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the financial success, and overall wellness, of participants. While most respondents spoke about the negative impacts, many also spoke positively about the opportunities to connect with other Indigenous women entrepreneurs online during the pandemic.

### LABOUR MANDATE

Near the end of the fiscal year, NWAC also started a small scope of work with the Labour Department, looking at legislation related to gig workers, the right to disconnect, mental health in the workplace, and pay equity. The purpose of this work was to support the development of policy initiatives and/or implementation processes that are responsive to the realities facing Indigenous women, both as employees and workers, in federally regulated workplaces.

NWAC conducted online consultations with groups of 10 to 12 Indigenous women from the four directions and developed reports summarizing the discussions and providing recommendations related to each labour mandate commitment.



# SECTION 6



# COMMUNICATIONS



# USING COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS TO HELP INDIGENOUS WOMEN RECLAIM PLACE, POWER AND IDENTITY

This has been an important year for advocacy work—and **NWAC** made sure that we were at the forefront of crucial discussions concerning Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people.



# Communications and Social Media

Using Communications and Social Media Tools to Help Indigenous Women Reclaim Place, Power and Identity

## COMMUNICATIONS

The Communications Team worked diligently to enhance NWAC's media presence. Between April 2020 and March 2021, we released 34 press releases on issues that concern the people we represent. During this time frame, our media exposure was close to seven thousand with a potential reach of over 600 million.

Among the press releases that we distributed during this period (see sidebar), a number of releases garnered an especially large amount of media attention. The highest-performing press release was "COVID-19 May Have Stopped the Government But It Hasn't Stopped Indigenous Women: NWAC Gives Government Failing Grade for 'Lack of Action Report'; Reveals Move Forward Strategy to Mark 1st Anniversary of MMIWG Inquiry Report." Its potential reach was 208.2 million and media exposure was 408.

During this period, the Communications Team also acted as a national voice when speaking out against violence against Indigenous women. Two prime examples involved our negative reaction to the government's lack of response to the MMIWG National Inquiry and our outrage following the deaths of Chantel Moore and Joyce Echaquan. These preventable and unimaginable losses were reminders of the systemic racism Indigenous women face, and NWAC spoke out loudly against this violence.

Starting in February 2021, NWAC also released our own national e-magazine, Kci-Niwesq, with two issues published during this reporting period. The monthly Kci-Niwesq brings the voices and issues of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people to the forefront by highlighting ground-breaking research on the challenges facing Indigenous women and gender-diverse people, innovative programs and initiatives, and featuring interviews with inspiring individuals.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

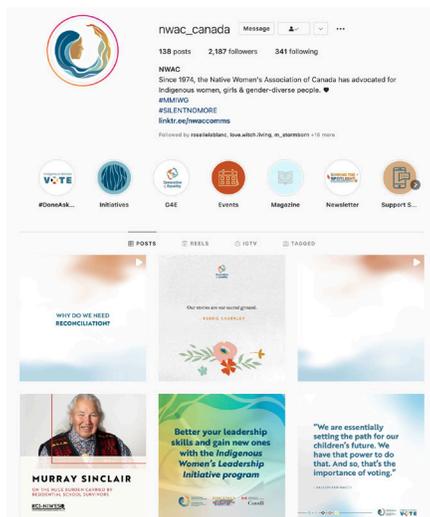
Using social media as a tool for advocacy, we were vocal on all of our social media accounts to ensure the voices of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people were heard.

Our Facebook page reached over 2.8 million between April 2020 and March 2021—up 785.6% in this reporting period compared to the previous year. Top performers were surveys, including the family housing survey, dementia survey, and entrepreneur survey, which are central to NWAC's policy work. Ensuring they are performing well and reaching a large audience is a crucial aspect of our social media reach.

We also regularly announced and promoted virtual workshops, run through the Resiliency Lodge. These workshops have proven to be incredibly popular and have helped to grow our following and reach on the Facebook platform.

Between April 2020 and March 2021, NWAC's Twitter account had over 5.8 million tweet impressions. Through this platform, which is central to our advocacy work, NWAC engages with others on critical issues concerning Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people. Top-performing content on this platform were tweets on our Summit of the Americas, as well as on important advocacy days such as Orange Shirt Day and the Trans Day of Visibility.

NWAC also launched Instagram and TikTok accounts in March 2021—an exciting step in helping us reach a new audience. In the first few weeks of launching these accounts, we had an Instagram reach of 3,400 and 1,500 views on TikTok.



## LIST OF PRESS RELEASES

Between April 2020 and March 2021, NWAC released 34 press releases.

### 2020

**APRIL 20:** NWAC President Offers Condolences to Those Affected by Nova Scotia Shooting

April 30: Native Women's Association of Canada Calls on Federal Government to Protect Incarcerated Indigenous Women, Gender-Diverse People from COVID-19

**MAY 12:** Violence against Indigenous Women During COVID-19 Sparks Calls for MMIWG Plan

**MAY 15:** NWAC To Tell MPS COVID-19 Increases Risk of Violence Against Indigenous Women, Urges Government to Release Plan to Meet Calls For Justice of Year-Old Inquiry

**MAY 27:** NWAC Appalled by Federal Government's National 'Lack-of-Action Plan' to Address Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls, and Gender-Diverse People

**JUNE 3:** Report Card on Government Follow-Up to Reclaiming Power and Place: Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

**JUNE 3:** COVID-19 May Have Stopped the Government But It Hasn't Stopped Indigenous Women: NWAC Gives Government Failing Grade for 'Lack of Action Report'; Reveals Move Forward Strategy to Mark 1st Anniversary of MMIWG Inquiry Report

**JUNE 5:** Statement by Lorraine Whitman, President of the Native Women's Association of Canada, on the Death of Chantel Moore

**JUNE 18:** Canada's Failed UN Security Council Bid: Lead by Example at Home to Lead by Example Abroad

**JUNE 23:** Native Women's Association of Canada Calls on Police & Politicians to Take Immediate Steps to End Police Violence Against Indigenous People

**JULY 16:** Statement by Lorraine Whitman, President of NWAC, on the Decision by Statistics Canada and Canadian Police Chiefs to Enhance Collection of Race-Based Crime Statistics

**JULY 29:** #BeTheDrum: Native Women's Association of Canada Offers Pioneering and Inclusive Approach to Problem Solving and Economic Participation Across Canada

**JULY 29:** Native Women's Association of Canada Echoes Family of Chantel Moore's Call for Public Inquiry to Determine the Circumstances of Her Death

**JULY 31:** NWAC Welcomes New Alberta PTMA: Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women

**AUGUST 19:** NWAC President Calls Upon RCMP to Begin an Urgent Search for a Missing 14-year-old Nova Scotia First Nations Girl

**SEPTEMBER 10:** Native Women's Association of Canada President Urges Ministers to Make Safety, Economic Security of Indigenous Women Priority in New Session of Parliament

**SEPTEMBER 21:** NWAC President Lorraine Whitman Calls on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to End Fishery Dispute in Nova Scotia

**SEPTEMBER 30:** Statement by Lorraine Whitman, President of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), on Tragic and Racist Incident in Joliette Hospital

**OCTOBER 16:** NWAC Calls for Provincial and Territorial Health Ministers to End Discrimination in Health Care, Root Out Racism in Health Workforces

**OCTOBER 22:** Michael Melancon-Koffend Student Award Recipients 2020

**OCTOBER 29:** Native Women's Association of Canada Combats Forced Sterilization with Knowing Your Rights Toolkit for Indigenous Women

**NOVEMBER 12:** No Honour in Manitoba Bill 2: Children's Special Allowance Funds Are Not the Province's to Keep—read our editorial by Adam Bond, NWAC Legal Counsel

**NOVEMBER 13:** NWAC Calls for Urgent Meeting with Justice Minister After Being Shut Out of Secret Talks on UNDRIP

**DECEMBER 1:** New Federal Funding for Indigenous Issues, Including MMIWG, Could Make a Big Difference in the Lives of First Nations, Inuit, Metis Women, and 2SLGBTQIA People

**DECEMBER 4:** The Introduction of Bill C-15 is a Welcome Key Step Forward Towards Reconciliation

**DECEMBER 18:** Christmas Trees Adorned with Indigenous Ornaments Growing in Popularity As Traditional Artisan Crafting Enjoys Resurgence

### 2021

**JANUARY 15:** NWAC Calls on New Brunswick Authorities to Share Results of Investigation: "Treat Family of First Nations Woman Slain by Police with More Transparency and Respect"

**JANUARY 28:** Native Women's Association of Canada Calls on Government to Give Indigenous Women Equal Voice to Men When Discussing Racism in Health Care

**FEBRUARY 2:** New Online Magazine from Native Women's Association of Canada Tells Amazing Stories of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Women of Canada

**FEBRUARY 10:** NWAC and Moose Hide Agee to Work Together to End Male Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls, and Gender-Diverse People

**FEBRUARY 10:** NWAC Meets with Minister, International Officials to Discuss New Resiliency Lodge—A Solution to Ending Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls, and Gender-Diverse People

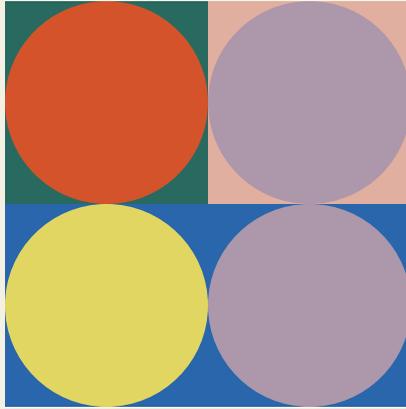
**MARCH 5:** Statement by Lorraine Whitman, President of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) for International Women's Day

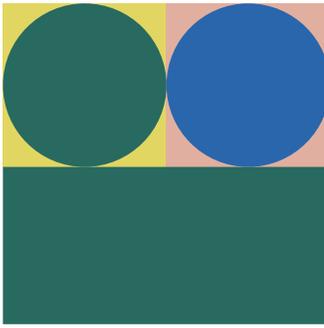
**MARCH 8:** Statement for International Women's Day 2021 from Lynne Groulx, CEO of Native Women's Association of Canada

**MARCH 8:** On International Women's Day, NWAC Announced International Summit to End Violence Against Indigenous Women Across the Americas

# SECTION 7

## FINANCIALS





# High Level FINANCIAL SUMMARY

**\$499,808**

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SURPLUS

The Native Women's Association of Canada reported a surplus of \$499,808 for the year ended March 31, 2021. The portfolio of projects this past year is consistent with the previous year. NWAC has been successful in working with several departments in the federal government which has enabled the organization to sustain programming and policy work in all our programming areas. The stability in project funding is a result of NWAC's ability to successfully deliver on its mission to advocate for and inspire women and families of many Indigenous nations. There are several project teams that are professionally staffed with the expertise in delivering across NWAC's wide portfolio of initiatives which include, economic development, health, policy and social development, resiliency, environment, and operations.

**\$358,000**

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DONORS

In the past year NWAC continued to attract many donors, mainly individual donors who contributed over \$358,000. This is almost triple from the previous year. The generous donations from friends of NWAC enable NWAC to work beyond the constraints of our program and project funding. In the coming year NWAC will be working hard to further diversify its funding with the goal of becoming more self-sufficient and better positioned to deliver on our mission and mandate.

**\$2.8m**

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NET ASSETS

At March 31, 2021 NWAC was well positioned with Net Assets in excess of \$2.8m and current assets of \$5m including cash and short-term investments of \$1.8m.



Reclaiming Our Place, Power and Identity

**NWAC 2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORT**