



# SHINING THE SPOTLIGHT

NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA NEWSLETTER



**NEW INITIATIVES**  
ISSUE 18 · OCT/NOV



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LYNNE GROULX

## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Traditionally, Indigenous women played a central role in the health and well-being of their communities. They were decision-makers in the use of resources, economics, and politics; they determined leadership; and they were leaders themselves.

Colonialism changed all that.

It's taken over a century but today, Indigenous women are once again assuming leadership roles. More than ever, Indigenous women are serving in First Nations governments and heading regional and national political organizations.

But we still have a long way to go, which is why the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) has updated the 2021 Voting Guide. There's a tremendous opportunity for Indigenous women—who are among the fastest-growing population segment in Canada—to actively take part in the federal election process. The updated Voting Guide is designed to not only encourage Indigenous women and gender-diverse people to exercise their right to vote, but also to sow the seed by having individuals consider putting themselves on a ballot in their own community.

In this issue of *Shining the Spotlight*, you'll read about the improvements we have made to the guide. For example, we have three new sections: planning your vote; voting accessibility; and running and supporting Indigenous candidates.

The issues that matter to the people we represent—Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse+ (WG2STGD+) people—are long-standing and are reflected in our daily work.

Our MMIWG2S team brings an update on the Safe Passage initiative, which is aimed at tracking new and emerging cases of missing and murdered Indigenous WG2STGD+ people.



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This initiative is meant to effect transformational change in every community across the country, and is linked to the creation of the Indigenous Women's Safety Council.

NWAC continues to place a strong emphasis on empowering Indigenous WG2STGD+ people economically. Ending their economic marginalization is one of the key calls to action issued by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. To end violence against women, you have to end their economic marginalization; you have to give them the tools to succeed and prosper.

To this end, we bring you stories on the four economic development programs run by NWAC. There's the Community Workforce Development Program for Indigenous WG2STGD+ people living in small communities, and to date we have six of our provincial and territorial member associations (PTMAs) have signed up for funding work placements in communities. We also update you on the #BeTheDrum, the Indigenous Women's Entrepreneur Accelerator, and the POETA initiatives. Four very different economic programs but all with one goal in mind—to raise up Indigenous WG2STGD+ people like Amy Dechaine.

In her own words, Amy tells us how she has been helped with support from the Indigenous Skills and Employment Training program (ISET). Through an agreement with Employment and Social Development Canada, NWAC provides financial support for such things as tuition, living allowance, and childcare to help Indigenous women pursue post-secondary education. With support, Amy has acquired a bachelor's degree in social work and has found work as a family/Indigenous outreach worker.

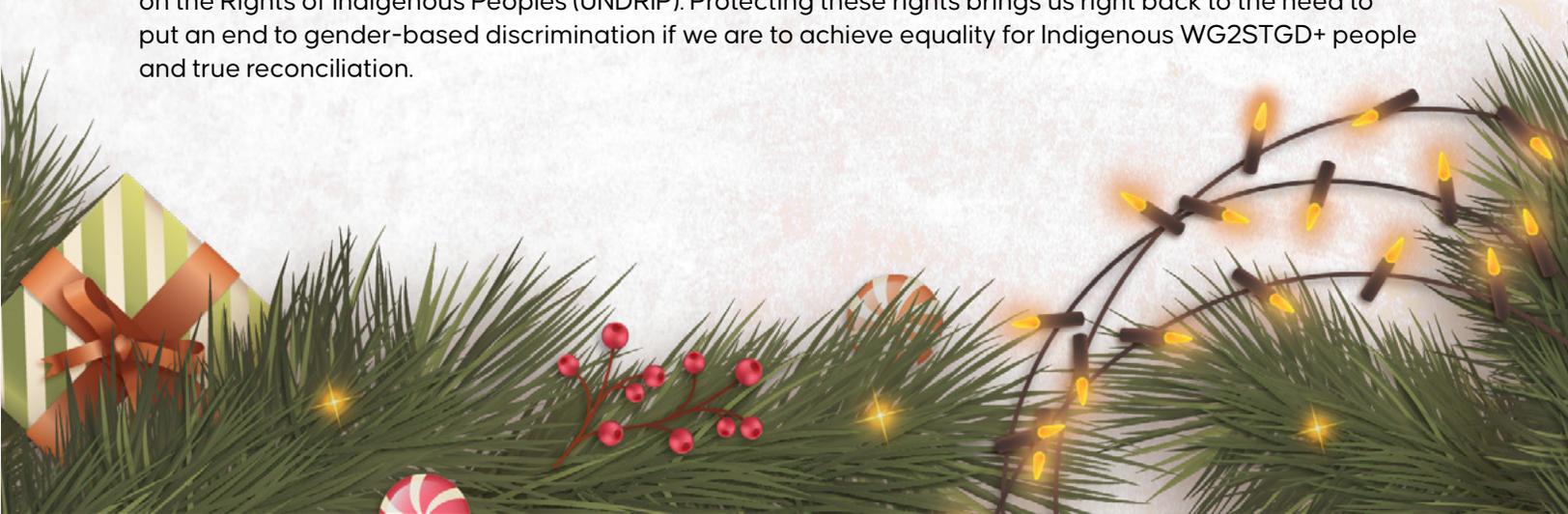
Diversity and inclusionary training is another key piece in our workplace file. Our efforts through the National Apprenticeship Program have focused greatly on ensuring that businesses embrace diversity and inclusion, address implicit biases, and foster a more harmonious and productive workplace.

Climate change is another very important focus of the work we do at NWAC. Historically, Indigenous women enjoyed the traditional and inherent roles as water carriers and caretakers. Because they carry water in their wombs, Indigenous women are the givers of life. As protectors of Mother Earth, they have a special bond with the earth and all it has to offer.

Our Environment team conducts a tremendous amount of research in this area, and was able to showcase its work at a recent Adaptations Future Conference, held in Montreal. In this issue, you will read about the Engaging Indigenous Peoples in Climate Change Policy Project.

In this issue, we also bring you a short update on the progress we have made in the areas of sterilization and sexual and reproductive health. Watch for upcoming training courses and webinars.

And last but certainly not least, I urge you to read the story about the testimony of our senior legal director at the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs. Sarah Niman underscored the failure of Bill S-13 to encompass the broader spectrum of rights outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Protecting these rights brings us right back to the need to put an end to gender-based discrimination if we are to achieve equality for Indigenous WG2STGD+ people and true reconciliation.



## Advocating for Indigenous WG2STGD People and Growing NWAC's Audience

During the months of October and November, the Communications Team worked on a variety of content and campaigns to further NWAC's advocacy work and objectives to support and uplift Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse (WG2STGD) people.

In October, we released edition 21 of the *Kci-Niwesq magazine*. This edition focused on the history of NWAC, from its founding in 1974, as well as on the broader Indigenous women's rights movement. It featured commentary from former NWAC President Jeanette Corbiere Lavell, who shared her decades-long fight to regain status, which took her all the way to the Supreme Court.

The magazine also featured a story on the origins of the Sisters in Sirit Vigil and how families of MMIWG2S+ people have found resilience, strength, and solidarity in coming together to remember and commemorate their lost loved ones.

We created a *Social Innovation Ventures* page on the website that brought together many different NWAC business entities to provide an overview and promote our new ventures, including meeting room rentals, the café and catering services, our boutique, and art sales and gallery.

NWAC issued a *press release* on October 4 congratulating Wab Kinew on his historic election as Premier of Manitoba—the first First Nations premier of a province of Canada.

On November 2, NWAC released a *press release* responding to the findings of the Zinger Report, which concluded that the

over-incarceration of Indigenous women (50% of federally incarcerated women are Indigenous) is a human rights travesty. NWAC echoed Dr. Zinger's call for immediate action to address this inequality.

On November 27, NWAC issued a *press release* announcing that NWAC delegates would be attending the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28), which runs from November 28 to November 30.



Gena Edwards, an environmental activist from Ts'kw'aylaxw First Nation in British Columbia and NWAC's First Vice President, along with Lisa J. Smith, an Inuk lawyer and Interim advisor to NWAC President Carol McBride, will both be at the annual international forum.

## **Indigenous Veterans Day**

To commemorate the bravery and sacrifice of Indigenous veterans, NWAC produced an information booklet about notable Indigenous soldiers, aviators, and sailors who helped keep Canada safe and secured their place in the history books. These war-time heroes included Charlotte Edith Anderson Monture, Dorothy Askwith, and Mary Greyeyes. Social media posts also helped highlight these brave Indigenous veterans and helped promote Indigenous Veterans Day as a day of recognition and remembrance.

## **Going Global Missions**

We produced a report detailing NWAC's recent Going Global work in Guatemala. The report summarized CEO Lynne Groulx's international work across the Americas to continue essential relationship building between NWAC and the eight nations that make up the Central American Integration System (Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana, or SICA). Each mission includes opportunities to build connections with both government representatives and entrepreneurs to foster economic growth for Indigenous Peoples across the continents. Social media posts were created to highlight the objectives and achieved goals of the international Going Global missions.

On November 25, NWAC marked the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on our social media channels, including the use of a banner to raise awareness. The campaign will run until December 10, to commemorate 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, culminating on International Human Rights Day.

Posts during this time reflected on the startling statistics concerning violence against Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people as human rights violations. These posts directed our audience to the UN's UNiTE campaign to learn more about this important initiative.

## **Social Media**

During the month of October, our social media accounts saw a significant rise in audience engagement—up 175.7%. We also grew our audience by 41% across different platforms.

A NWAC post that shared artwork from Soni López-Chávez (@soni\_artist) with the text *If trauma can be passed down through generations, then so can healing* received our highest interaction for October, with 34,916 total engagements and a reach of 474,982. This post inspired discussion, with our audience leaving 881 comments.

Also in October, we published 305 social media posts across our platforms, including X.com (Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

In November, our most viewed post was a motivational quote paired with a beautiful image of Indigenous artwork by Eloy Bida, which received a reach of 879,623. At the time of reporting, there were 461 posts published in November, with a spike in video views up 294% noted midway through the month compared to a similar time period in the previous month. This month, NWAC social media accounts gained an audience net growth of 150.9%.

Follow us on Facebook, X/Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and LinkedIn to stay up to date on all of NWAC's initiatives and be sure to subscribe to our magazine, Kci-Niwesq.

# Empowering Indigenous WG2STGD+ People Economically

In this issue, the Economic Development Team offers updates on four economic development programs.

## Community Workforce Development Program

Funded by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), the Community Workforce Development Program aims to improve the lives of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse (WG2STGD+) people living in communities with populations of less than 10,000.

The program consists of two pillars: online or in-person skills training; and facilitating work placements at local small- and medium-sized employers (SMEs) by providing wage subsidies for those who have completed their training. The aim is to encourage local employers to hire the individual once the subsidized work placement ends.

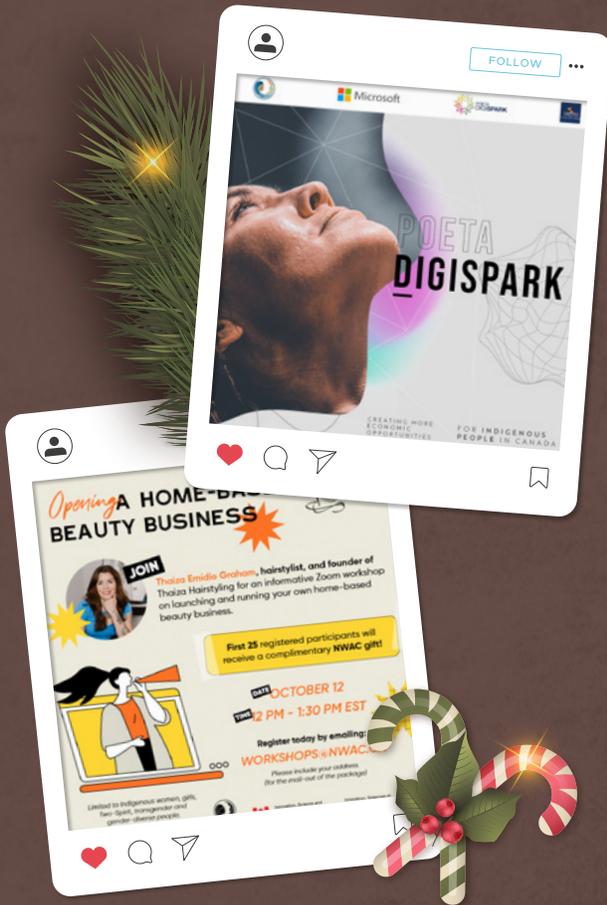
The training sessions cover a wide range of skills, including digital literacy, job-specific proficiencies, and hands-on trade-like abilities such as barista or culinary training. Such a diverse range of training opportunities is designed to equip participants with as many skills as possible to help them thrive in the workforce.

NWAC is implementing the project in collaboration with our provincial and territorial member associations (PTMAs). The PTMAs identify the communities and determine local labour market needs by engaging with SMEs to determine job opportunities and skills required.

To date, six PTMAs (Saskatchewan, Manitoba, British Columbia, Prince Edward Island, Nunavut, and Newfoundland and Labrador) have signed agreements. NWAC continues to work on securing agreements with four other PTMAs that have verbally agreed to participate (Alberta, Yukon, Northwest Territories, and New Brunswick).

PTMAs will receive a maximum of \$27,000 to help cover administrative costs for implementation. Instalment payments will be made as milestones are met. Manitoba and Saskatchewan PTMAs are in the process of receiving the first and second milestone payments, respectively.

In Saskatchewan, participants from the Grasswoods community have completed online training for the retail sector and work placements are under way with a local SME.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TEAM



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In Manitoba, participants are enrolled in training to prepare for work in early childhood education. The courses include first aid/ CPR, health, nutrition and safety, WHIMIS, and safe food handling. The Nikanihk Ascahkosak Daycare has signed the work placement agreement and developed a training plan for the participants. The work placement is tentatively scheduled to start in February 2024.

We have held meetings throughout November with the Aboriginal Women's Association of Prince Edward Island (AWAPEI), Newfoundland Native Women's Association (NNWA-NFLD), and Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council (YAWC). The focus of these meetings was to identify participants and SMEs. NWAC continues to provide posters to support the PTMAs' efforts to recruit participants.

The first of three roundtables is scheduled for December 12, 2023. It will bring together academics, policy-makers, and community leaders to discuss the labour market situation for Indigenous WGBTQ2S+ people.

The outcome of these roundtable discussions will be used to develop a national workforce strategy for Indigenous WG2STGD+ people. Our goal is to identify and make recommendations to address the unique challenges faced by Indigenous communities and help contribute to overall economic empowerment.

We are eager to see this transformative project unfold, paving the way for a brighter, more inclusive future for all.

### #BeTheDrum

#BeTheDrum is an entrepreneurial outreach and navigation program that has been operating for over three years. It was developed by NWAC and is funded by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada. It is designed to build the skills of Indigenous women and

gender-diverse people entering the spheres of business, management, and entrepreneurship. #BeTheDrum is very successful, with over 350 Indigenous women and gender-diverse entrepreneur members to date.

#BeTheDrum works to engage and prepare existing and budding Indigenous entrepreneurs for continued success. Those who join our program are greeted by a team of dedicated entrepreneur navigators and mentors, with access to relevant workshops, networking events, peer-to-peer groups, and live social media Q&A sessions. This support helps to increase the likelihood of businesses becoming successful enterprises.

#BeTheDrum offers a vast array of topics for its workshops.

In October, Amy Silva facilitated a workshop on "Let's Talk about Doula Business" and Thaiza Emidio Graham led a workshop on "Opening a Home-Based Beauty Business".

In November, Lizanne Leclair presented "Goal Setting Through Stressful Times" where she provided information on how to set goals, maintain focus, and achieve work-life balance. Christine Luckasavitch gave a presentation on "Keeping a Good Heart: Navigating Colonial Structures in Business," where she discussed how to identify, tackle, and help create an economic environment where Indigenous businesses can thrive. Amanda Pierce led an interesting workshop on "Social Media for Artists". She explained how she uses social media to share and sell her artwork and provided tips on building an audience on Facebook and Instagram.

Our bi-weekly networking circles continue to attract a diverse group of Indigenous entrepreneurs. These events are hosted by matriarch and Olympian Waneek Horn-Miller, who plays a vital role in providing a platform for collaboration and knowledge-sharing among members.

### Indigenous Women's Entrepreneur Accelerator

The WES Accelerator program holds one workshop and one networking circle every month. Workshop topics include "Creativity in Digital Spaces", "Artistry and Digital Illustration", "Making it in the Beading Industry," and the "Art of Entrepreneurship". We also continue to provide mentorship and navigational support to member entrepreneurs.

### POETA

In September 2023, NWAC launched the POETA project in Canada in collaboration with The Trust of the Americas and Microsoft. This initiative aims to empower historically marginalized Indigenous populations in the country, placing a specific focus on women and gender-diverse individuals. NWAC provides comprehensive training and content on digital skills. Additional components address life and technical skills.

The POETA project is meant to enhance the skills and profiles of job-seekers and entrepreneurs aged 16 and above within the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis populations in Canada. The ultimate goal is to help them participate in the digital economy. This initiative represents a crucial step towards addressing the unique challenges faced by Indigenous communities and fostering sustainable opportunities for growth and success.

In October, the successful launch of the POETA project in Canada was celebrated through a well-received kick-off webinar. Phase 1, known as the Train the Trainers training, concluded successfully. Over a two-week period, comprehensive training was delivered to 10 facilitators on the Microsoft Community Training (MCT) platform.

In November, we began recruiting participants for training. In collaboration with NWAC's

Communications Department, a call for participants was advertised on our social media channels. In addition, an invitation to participate in POETA was extended to #BeTheDrum members, which resulted in more than 10 members registering for training.

A total of 70 participants have registered for Training 1 on Microsoft Learning Pathways, which begins on December 4 and continues for two weeks. This group will be the first cohort. The participants are organized into four groups and each group is assigned to a specific trainer.





## NWAC at the Adaptations Future Conference

NWAC's Environment Unit continues to represent the perspectives of Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people at international climate change conferences. One of these conferences is the **Adaptations Future Conference**, which took place in Montreal this year. This annual international event is devoted entirely to climate change adaptation.

Representing NWAC was Hannah Patrie, a policy officer attached to the Environment Unit. Together with researchers, policy-makers, industry representatives, and Indigenous Peoples from around the world, Hannah contributed to conference presentations on resilience and the global climate crisis.

NWAC was invited to attend the conference by the **Centre of Indigenous Environmental Resources** (CIER). NWAC's booth showcased the research conducted by the Environment Unit under the Engaging Indigenous Peoples in Climate Change Policy Project.

The Adaptations Future Conference provides NWAC with the opportunity to share its indigenous-led perspectives on climate change adaptation from the perspectives of Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people. The conference also presents opportunities to network and collaborate with professionals from various environmental and climate-related disciplines.

"As a Metis Anishinaabe woman, I got to share the critical work that our people have been doing to protect Mother Earth for time immemorial. I spoke with many individuals; every single person was interested in the accomplishments of Indigenous People here on Turtle Island. Even more so, they respected and admired our efforts in a demeanor seldom seen at such high-level events. From scientists to policymakers, attendees were enthused by the undeniable presence and importance of Indigenous Peoples in climate adaptation, mitigation, and environmental protection and innovation" (Hannah Patrie, Policy Officer, NWAC's Environment Unit).



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Hannah sums up her experience:

*I had the rare opportunity to intimately talk to and learn from Indigenous People from so many different regions. I conversed with Indigenous women from Peru about their resiliency in today's world. I learned more about medicine from my home region, which has continuously been affected by climate impacts. I got to meet the faces of an Indigenous-led environmental mission that I have been admirably following, called Reconnection Vision.*

*I spoke with elders from the Northwest Territories about climate change and what motherhood will look like for myself and the generations that come after me in such a changing landscape. I learned how to bead, speak some Ojibwe, and converse about injustice against communities with the amazing fellow Anishinaabe women next to me.*

Hannah went on to say:

*I exchanged cultural teachings and prophecies with Bella Bella People from Haitzaqv Nation. The significance of these interactions speaks to the relevancy of this conference and, specifically, our gathering of Indigenous Peoples. There we sat, each with our own experiences, languages, and cultures, but we collectively knew that our presence as one had power.*



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## Encouraging Indigenous Participation in the Democratic Process

The participation of Indigenous WG2STGD+ people in the democratic process in Canada represents a significant opportunity to address the social, political, and economic barriers facing Indigenous communities. However, thanks to a confusing democratic process and a lack of accessible information on how to vote, many Indigenous WG2STGD+ people feel they're not heard.

NWAC's Executive Policy Team has been hard at work to change this. It all starts with an inclusive voter's guide that will, hopefully, encourage Indigenous WG2STGD+ people to take part in the federal election process.

The team has revamped the 2021 Voting Guide to include three new sections: planning your vote; voting accessibility; and running and supporting Indigenous candidates. Funded by Elections Canada, the 2023 Voter's Guide will provide Indigenous WG2STGD+ people with an accessible and fully comprehensive toolkit to increase voter turnout and spur Indigenous representation in the federal political system.

We have added to the "Planning Your Vote" section, providing more information for voters on their rights as electors, how to cast a ballot on election day, and what to expect when arriving at a polling station.

We have also created a new section called "Voting Accessibility," which we created with diverse communities in mind. Regardless of your situation, it is your right to be able to vote. Your vote does matter! In this section, voters can find information on:

- how to vote for individuals living with disabilities

- language and sign language availability
- how to vote while experiencing homelessness
- how to vote while serving a prison sentence in Canada
- how to vote in the case of a natural disaster

To enrich the 2023 Voter's Guide, the team interviewed four Members of Parliament to understand their experiences in running for office. This new content will provide valuable insights and practical advice for Indigenous WG2STGD+ people.

In the "Running for Candidacy" section, individuals and prospective candidates can discover insights on the candidacy process, how to leverage community support, and how voters can support their local candidates effectively.

We are thrilled to be providing Indigenous WG2STGD+ people with a new and revitalized guide that emphasizes their participation in all stages of the electoral process.





## Spotlight on Sterilization and Sexual and Reproductive Health

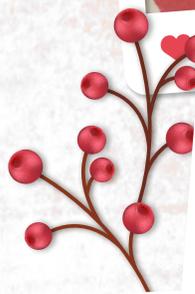
NWAC's Health Unit has made progress on two important files: the forced and coerced sterilization of Indigenous women and culturally safe and trauma-informed sexual and reproductive healthcare.

**Forced and Coerced Sterilization Project:** We are working on preparations for conducting a literature search on historical events related to the forced and coerced sterilization of Indigenous Peoples. To date, we have completed the timeline segment of this project.

**Supporting Culturally Safe and Trauma-Informed Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare:** We have laid the groundwork for upcoming plans to hold virtual peer-support sessions and to develop educational resources on culturally safe and trauma-informed sexual and reproductive healthcare for service providers.

Upcoming training courses and webinars include:

- Culturally safe and trauma informed education for sexual and reproductive health and social service providers – Sexual and Reproductive Health Awareness Week in February 2024
- Cultural and gender diversity – November 22, 2023



## Amy Dechaine's ISET Journey

Starting college or university as a mature student with a busy family (I have four kids), is terrifying, overwhelming, and a little crazy. Schedules, travelling, deadlines, and the dreaded finances all bring significant stress. But things are meant to happen when they do and I am so proud to have completed the Indigenous Bachelor or Social Work Degree at University nuhelot'jine thaiyots'j nistameyimākanak Blue Quills. With support from the Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Program (ISET), I was able to complete the program. By completing this program, I have been able to show my children that it is never too late to do something you love and that it takes sacrifice and hard work to achieve it.

I first heard of the Native Women's Association of Canada about 20 years ago as my sister was supported through NWAC in her educational journey. I never thought I would go to college or university to receive a degree because school was extremely difficult for me. and I did not want to fail. I love helping others and always have. So I applied for and completed the Community Social Work (CSW) program at our local college.



During this time I discovered many things about myself. I came to the realization that I have ADHD, severe anxiety, a learning disability and with all this struggled with depression. This is why I would fail every exam in high school. I also discovered that educational settings today offer more supports for those who need extra support.

I also realized that my diploma was lacking in one specific area that I know is extremely important—Indigenous world views, teachings, and knowledge. I also realized I wanted to continue my educational journey.

I was accepted into the Indigenous Bachelor or Social Work degree at University nuhelot'jine thaiyots'j nistameyimākanak Blue Quills. This program was absolutely amazing. It was a course full of learning about yourself, looking at your own traumas. You cannot help others if you cannot help yourself, if you cannot look or recognize your own biases and privilege, and understand what your triggers are. if you are able to recognize these, then you are more equipped to support others and less likely to harm those you work with. In the end, I am fully confident that this educational journey has equipped me with the tools necessary to be a miyo ototemihthiwew otatoskew (good relationship worker).

After being a one-income household for such a long time, our family finances were already bleak. Receiving support from NWAC's ISET has truly set up me and my family for success. I received funding for the tuition and books, and a living allowance. I was also told if I ever needed any support with anything to not hesitate to ask, even if it is just a phone call.

As wonderful as the program is in that its focus is on supporting Indigenous women to become employable, I can't help but wonder how valuable it would be if it would also help Indigenous women receive higher post-secondary education. Elevating Indigenous women in their careers will do so much for communities.

It will increase our presence in areas where they are limited, such as in management, policy, government and politics, education, and Indigenous education—areas that make change, build strength, and project our voices.

At Blue Quills, and places like it, we explored what it truly means to decolonize and indigenize our spaces and how we need to take back our voices and recognize the strength that is in everyone. Finances are always a huge barrier to continuing our education, and eliminating this barrier would be a wonderful step to elevating Indigenous women.

Decolonize and Indigenize: this is my passion and I share and teach this in my workplace, as much as I am able, with both teachers and students. I am employed as a Family/ Indigenous Outreach Worker (school counsellor). I enjoy being out in the community and sharing what I have learned. I have been decolonizing my space and my practice, and in doing so I have created positive relationships with students and their families. Making cultural spaces, teachings, and art has created a space where students know they are heard, seen, appreciated, and understood.

The next steps for me are exciting. I decided to continue with my education and have been accepted into the Indigenous Master's of Social Work program at Blue Quills. When I complete this program in two years, I hope to be able to become an instructor at the university.

In my community learning class, I and two other amazing women are working on a project that is grant-based for Métis individuals. It includes restorative justice practices, understanding trauma, healing from trauma, and so much more.

I want to thank each and every one of you who have created, built, supported, worked hard for, and implemented this educational program along with all the other programming that is offered. These programs are truly making a difference and changing lives in positive ways. You are helping people find their voices, build their confidence and pride, see their worth, and so much more.



## MMIWG2S: Inspiring Transformational Change

Two key areas of focus for NWAC's MMIWG2S Unit are the Safe Passage initiative and the Indigenous Women's Safety Council.

### Safe Passage Initiative

One of the actions outlined in NWAC's report *Our Calls Our Actions* is aimed at tracking new or emerging cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and gender-diverse people (MMIWG2S+). The National Inquiry's Call for Justice 9.5 called for the creation of a national database. In response, NWAC launched the Safe Passage website in 2021.

Through this dedicated website, we are documenting the legacy of systemic violence that creates and maintains the genocide. The scope of the crisis is highlighted on an interactive map, where cases of missing or murdered Indigenous MMIWG2S+ people are tracked. Visitors to the website can visualize the case data, as well as explore the educational materials that are provided. These materials look at the role that sexual exploitation and human trafficking play in the genocide.

In 2022-2023, we expanded the Safe Passage website into a community-driven, trauma-informed, and survivor-centred initiative, complete with a holistic and trauma-informed national MMIWG2S+ database, research and educational tools, and culturally relevant support and care.

Designed to effect transformational change, the initiative continues to document the legacy of systemic violence that creates and maintains the genocide while also holding space for MMIWG2S+ families and survivors to have their stories be heard, believed,

valued, and shared on their own terms. The additional data layers provide a more in-depth visualization of the scope of the genocide. The community resources map, new violence prevention toolkits, and Elder and Knowledge Keeper support offer resources for those who seek emotional guidance and support.



The updated version of Safe Passage encompasses the following:

- monitors ongoing safety concerns through the unsafe experiences reporting tool and map
- provides distinctions-based safety resources on the community resources map
  - › contains over 1,500 immediate and long-term safety resources and can be filtered by region and resource type
- maps MMIWG2S+ cases by region and type to better educate and inform the Canadian public about the ongoing genocide
- centres the voices and stories of MMIWG2s+ families and survivors through the Safe Passage stories page, a digital space that commemorates and honours missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and gender-diverse people
- provides resources for individuals, industries, and communities that are directly connected to the genocide and provides specific and distinctions-based training and tools
  - › includes five new toolkits aimed at violence prevention
- equips media and journalists to report on the genocide through the media alert system
- provides Elder and Knowledge Keeper support for individuals who have been impacted by the loss of a missing or murdered loved one
  - › provide emotional support and guidance that is grounded in Indigenous Knowledge and healing practices

### Indigenous Women's Safety Council

In spring 2023, NWAC established the Indigenous Women's Safety Council, which is composed of 18 members from our provincial and territorial member associations.

The Council was created to gather the perspectives, invaluable knowledge, and expertise of grassroots Indigenous women's organizations. In particular, NWAC invited the Council to share knowledge, views, and concerns on the newly updated Safe Passage website to improve the ability to track missing and murdered cases, enable Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people to report areas and experiences where they feel unsafe, and ensure that they have access to appropriate community resources and supports.

NWAC meets with the Council regularly—thus ensuring that they are at the centre of our efforts to end the genocide.





## Elevating Indigenous Voices: NWAC's Advocacy on Bill S-13

As Canada considers the implications of Bill S-13, an Act to amend the Interpretation Act, NWAC stands at the forefront of advocating for Indigenous rights. As the association's representative, Sarah Niman, Senior Legal Director, recently testified before the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs. In her testimony, she offered crucial insights into the bill's potential impact and the broader strides toward legal reconciliation.

Bill S-13 is pivotal in its potential alignment with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). This significant global instrument affirms the rights of Indigenous Peoples, including their entitlement to maintain distinct political, legal, economic, social, and cultural institutions. Niman's testimony, backed by the collective efforts of NWAC, highlights the need for Bill S-13 to fully align with UNDRIP to address gaps in protecting Indigenous rights.

A key concern raised by NWAC is the bill's failure to encompass the broader spectrum of rights outlined in UNDRIP. "NWAC wants Bill S-13 amended to include specific reference to UNDRIP," Niman stated, echoing the association's position. This amendment is crucial, especially for safeguarding the rights of Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse+ individuals, as it provides protections beyond those covered by existing treaty agreements and Section 35.

NWAC's collective advocacy underscores the bill's inadequacies in tackling gender-based disempowerment within Indigenous communities.

The association stresses that the bill's current form, assuming gender neutrality, risks perpetuating systemic gender-based discrimination in areas such as membership rights, housing, and governance roles.

During her testimony, Niman called for the bill to explicitly include and affirm UNDRIP rights. This inclusion is essential for addressing specific challenges faced by Indigenous communities and ensuring that Indigenous rights are not just acknowledged but actively upheld.

NWAC's advocacy reflects a broader vision for Indigenous rights in Canada, emphasizing the need for legal frameworks that not only recognize but actively enforce and protect Indigenous rights. As Niman noted, "In order for the rights affirmed in UNDRIP to be upheld and protected, they need to be affirmed in case law."

As the dialogue around Bill S-13 continues, the work undertaken by NWAC's Legal Unit highlights the necessity of a legal system that genuinely respects and enforces Indigenous rights. Their collective efforts shape the future of legal reforms, ensuring Indigenous rights, particularly those of women and gender-diverse individuals, are central to legal interpretation and application in Canada.

Learn more:

- [Ms. iman's testimony in full](#)
- [NWAC's official brief on Bill S-13](#)





## Enhancing Cultural Safety in the Workplace

NWAC's National Apprenticeships Program (NAP), which is funded by the Government of Canada, aims to reach communities across Canada through regular information sessions that are delivered online. To spread the word, the NAP Team has sent invitations by postal mail directly to First Nations communities, inviting interested Indigenous women and 2SLGTBQIA+ individuals to join our conversations. We have also reached out to thousands of organizations, including friendship centres and local colleges.

These efforts have led to positive results.

Through our program, many Indigenous women and 2SLGTBQIA+ individuals are able to envision a future for themselves in the trades, where they never thought they would find a fit. They are paving the way for many others who wish to join the skilled trades in the future.



A number of communities and centres have given an Indigenous woman a chance to learn a trade through the program. In October and November alone, we have placed five apprentices in welding businesses, most of them in the Prairies. Other apprentices started their journey as a carpenter, millwright, or HVAC mechanic.

Businesses need skilled employees. But bringing women into male-dominated environments requires change and a commitment by businesses to providing equal treatment to Indigenous women and 2SLGTBQIA+ individuals.

Our training modules have a huge educational piece, where small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) receive training on a number of fronts.

### Diversity and Inclusion Training

Through NAP, our team builds understanding of and knowledge about the history, culture, traditions, and rights of Indigenous Peoples. Effective communication is crucial in any workplace, and our training modules emphasize the need for employers to incorporate ethical values and cultural safety into the workplace.

To ensure that businesses truly embrace diversity and inclusion, employers are encouraged to reflect on their existing practices and identify any barriers that might hinder Indigenous women and 2SLGTBQIA+ individuals from pursuing careers in the skilled trades. Employers evaluate their policies, processes, and workplace culture, and are encouraged to make any necessary changes to create a safe and inclusive environment. This may include addressing implicit biases, providing cultural sensitivity training for existing staff, and implementing policies that promote equal opportunity for all.

This inclusive approach not only promotes diversity but also enhances the overall productivity and success of the SME.

By promoting respectful and inclusive communication practices, businesses create an environment where every individual feels valued and respected. This helps to break down stereotypes, prejudices, and biases, and fosters a more harmonious and productive workplace.

By equipping employers with the necessary knowledge and skills to create a safe and inclusive environment, we ensure that every apprentice has a fair and equal opportunity to learn and grow.

### Recruitment, Retention, and Mentorship Training

SMEs that hire apprentices through our program also receive training on topics that will benefit their business. Our training modules offer tips on how to recruit, retain, and mentor Indigenous women and 2SLGBTBQIA+ individuals

One aspect of our training modules focuses on recruitment strategies that target Indigenous women and 2SLGBTBQIA+ individuals. We provide guidance on how to develop outreach programs and partnerships with Indigenous communities and organizations. By actively engaging with these communities, businesses can create a pipeline of talented individuals who may have otherwise been overlooked or faced barriers in accessing employment opportunities.

Retention and mentorship are also key components of our program. We understand the importance of providing ongoing support and guidance to apprentices to ensure their success in the skilled trades industry. Our training modules include strategies for employers to establish effective mentorship programs, fostering connections between experienced tradespeople and apprentices. Mentorship not only enhances the skills and knowledge transfer process but also creates a supportive environment where apprentices can thrive.

The National Apprenticeships Program is dedicated to supporting businesses in their journey towards establishing equitable and inclusive workplaces. By providing training on the recruitment, retention, and mentorship of Indigenous women and 2SLGBTBQIA+ individuals, as well as emphasizing effective communication and cultural safety, businesses can create an environment that values diversity and ensures equal opportunities for all. By actively addressing barriers to equity and inclusion, companies not only fulfill their moral obligations but also enhance their own success in the market.

Together, we can build a more inclusive skilled trades industry that benefits all participants—apprentice employees and SMEs.





# SHINING THE SPOTLIGHT

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