



SHINING THE SPOTLIGHT



NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA NEWSLETTER

NEW INITIATIVES • ISSUE 12 • OCT/NOV 2022



TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Message from the CEO	5
Social Development Team: Revitalizing Indigenous languages	7
Legal Affairs and Justice Unit: Returning jurisdiction over child and family services to Indigenous bodies.....	9
International Unit: Bringing the message of inclusivity to COP27	11
Health Unit: The importance of intergenerational connections.....	13
Executive Policy: Shared learning on 2SLGBTQQIA+ perspectives.....	15
Environment Team: Focus on navigable waters and water carriers.....	16
Labour and Employment Policy Unit focuses on employment equity	19
Economic Development Team: Promoting Indigenous entrepreneurs.....	21
Communications and Marketing Team: New tools and campaigns, new followers, larger reach.....	25



A Message from the CEO

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is the national voice for Indigenous Women, Girls, Transgender, and Gender-Diverse people. Everything we do comes from this place, this focus on the people we serve.

In this issue of *Shining the Spotlight*, you'll read all about many of the issues we care about and the specific files we are working on. You'll read about our work on issues related to the environment, Indigenous languages, health, intergenerational trauma, employment equity, child and family services, as well as our work to promote Indigenous women entrepreneurs and providing Indigenous youth with tools for rekindling communities and intergenerational connections.

Let's unpack some of these issues.

When it comes to employment equity, there's a direct correlation between the work we're doing on this file and helping to improve the lives of the people we represent, including advocating for increased mental health supports for Indigenous women and gender-diverse workers.

A Message from the CEO - Cont.

Climate change is another huge issue. It affects all of us, and as the voice for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQAI+ people, NWAC is working hard here at home in Canada and internationally to advocate for the protection of Mother Earth and the right to both water and food security. That's why we are engaged in discussions with the federal government on changes to the *Canadian Navigable Waters Act*; calling on the need for increased decision-making power at the grassroots level through the Water Carrier Phase 2 project; and ensuring the voices of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people are heard at international forums like COP27, where NWAC was invited to form part of the Canadian delegation.

And, when it comes to child and family services, NWAC has been loud and clear that jurisdiction for the well-being of our children must be returned to Indigenous bodies. You'll read about the recent work our Legal Affairs and Justice Unit has been doing in addressing NWAC's concerns about this humanitarian crisis where over half of the children in state care are Indigenous.

The articles in this issue of our newsletter only touch on some of the many topics in which NWAC is involved. On every file we work on, NWAC is ever mindful of our mission to advocate for and inspire women, girls, 2SLGBTQQAI+ people, and the families of many Indigenous nations. Every action we take is designed to move us toward achieving an inclusive world that understands and respects the diversity and uniqueness of all Indigenous women, girls, 2SLGBTQQAI+ people, and families.





Social Development Team: Revitalizing Indigenous languages

The Social Development Team is sourcing various avenues, such as unexplored mythologies, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, the knowledge and teaching of our Knowledge Keepers and Elders, in our work to revitalize Indigenous languages. As always, the perspectives of Indigenous women, girls, transgender, 2slgbtq, and gender-diverse individuals inform this work.

Currently, we are focused on three main language streams (and their dialects): Algonquin, Métis, and Inuit languages. We will be holding language workshops and other types of sessions to engage and harness individuals and communities.

NWAC recently received funding for a project focused on traditional language, culture, and intersections with 2SLGBTQ+ identity. This project started in October and will be completed in March 2023. The aim of the project is to develop new online learning resources that will increase knowledge of the history of Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ peoples in Canada. Through a virtual engagement session, Indigenous people from different generations will be engaged to share their knowledge and experiences related to 2SLGBTQ+ identity, traditional language and culture, and

Social Development Team: Revitalizing Indigenous languages - CONT

how these intersect. The project will also elevate the voices of Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ youth, Elders, and Knowledge Holders, and improve knowledge and understanding among Canadians.

Our team is also creating an online library of resources on Indigenous cultures and languages, as well as important community data and research on topics such as missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people, that Indigenous women and gender-diverse people can access. A physical library and archives will be housed at NWAC's Social and Economic Innovation Centre in Hull by March 2023.

To date, we have held 24 three-hour language workshops, which have been well attended. Participants have made traditional items during the course of learning and practicing Michif, Algonquin, and Inuktitut languages. Highlights and outcomes of these workshops include the following:

- Participants engage with their culture and identity by learning how to make moccasins, ribbon skirts, drums, and quill baskets.
- Cross-cultural exchange and knowledge sharing are the vehicles for passing on Indigenous languages and culture.

In December, we will be delivering five workshops on the Anishnaabemowin language (three sessions for adults and two sessions for moms and children).

On 8th of November, we commemorated the National Indigenous Veterans Day at Social, Cultural, and Economic Innovation Centre.

It was a heartfelt day, and many staff members attended the event in-person and virtually. We laid the wreath from NWAC at the Indigenous war memorial in Ottawa.





Legal Affairs and Justice Unit: Returning jurisdiction over child and family services to Indigenous bodies

Over half the children in state care in Canada are Indigenous, despite making up only 7.7% of the population. This is a “humanitarian crisis,” as described by Patty Hadju, Minister of Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), and reflects Canada’s long history of discriminating against Indigenous Peoples. The federal *Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth, and Families* is aimed at addressing this crisis by returning jurisdiction over child and family services to Indigenous governing bodies that wish to exercise it, or by working in coordination with them. The Act came into force on January 1, 2020.

The Legal Affairs and Justice Unit received funding from ISC to host and organize six roundtable discussions and 15 one-on-one interviews. These sessions and interviews will be used to gather the perspectives of Indigenous people, including those with lived experiences, child and family services experts, Elders, youth, women, and people from across the country. The roundtables consist of North, South, East, West, national, and youth-focused sessions.

Legal Affairs and Justice Unit: Returning jurisdiction over child and family services to Indigenous bodies - CONT.

ISC provided 17 topics they hope to learn more about, as the department prepares to table a report in Parliament reviewing how the Act is really being implemented across Canada. NWAC identified eight additional gender-focused issues related to how the Act impacts Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people in particular. These topics include things like typically male-dominated decision-making entities within Indigenous governing bodies, and the discrimination that Indigenous women face when seeking services, such as prenatal care. By considering gender, we look at the ways in which people's intersecting identities (such as sexual orientation, age, disability, Indigeneity, and history) must be considered in order to stop further unfair treatment.

It is not enough to say that these voices are valued. Active steps must be taken to amplify and address the concerns of Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people. Our unit is working to amplify these voices by positioning them at the centre of our engagement sessions. The discussions and interviews will inform two annual reports to ISC. These reports will outline recommendations on implementation, a summary and discussion of best practices, key concerns and possible solutions related to the 17 government-provided topics, and a summary and discussion of legislative and/or policy amendments to advance the purposes and effectiveness of the Act.

After two months of preparation, we are finally kicking off the roundtable discussions! So far, we have held two (North and South regions) and seven interviews. Elders opened and closed our discussions in a good way, helping conversations to be grounded, safe, and meaningful. It has been an honour to have these professional and personal experts share their stories and advice with us. The discussions have been insightful and impassioned. The participants' deep care for others and drive to find a better way of doing things has been inspiring. Our recommendations to ISC will surely reflect lived realities and gender-based concerns.

We are looking forward to hosting the remaining roundtables and interviews and continuing to gather this invaluable feedback. The fact that we are hosting our very first youth roundtable is an especially humbling experience for us, and we look forward to amplifying their voices. Every participant has contributed a new and unique perspective, and we look forward to capturing these in our final report.





International Unit: Bringing the message of inclusivity to COP27

Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) invited two representatives from the Native Women's Association of Canada to form part of the Canadian delegation for COP27. Madeleine Redfern, President of the Nunavut Inuit Women's Association (NIWA), and Lisa Smith, Senior Director of International Relations, arrived in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, on November 5 and departed on November 10, 2022.

On November 6, we attended a meeting of the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC). We were advised that this was the largest Indigenous caucus to date, with over 200 participants.

We met with Catherine Stewart, Canada's Ambassador for Climate Change, where we highlighted the need for all of government to implement (align) all policies, laws, and operational practices with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP). We discussed NWAC's Action Plan to the Calls for Justice of the Final Report of the National inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, specifically the calls related to resiliency lodges.

International Unit: Bringing the message of inclusivity to COP27 - CONT.

The conversation flowed into food security and nutrition, and energy strategic planning in the North. We brought the same messaging to our meeting with Minister Steven Guilbeault on November 10.

We also facilitated a side event at Canada's inaugural pavilion on November 9. We discussed climate resiliency and the importance of Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse leadership in climate action. Participants from the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community thanked NWAC for hosting this event, as they believe their voices are not being heard in the climate action fight. They also expressed the view that COP27 was not inclusive.

We provided that messaging to the Minister and he thanked NWAC for providing an inclusive space.

We hope to continue to bring NWAC's voice and inclusive spaces to COP28 in Dubai in 2023.





Health Unit: The importance of intergenerational connections

On October 26, the Health Unit held our first public two-hour virtual Generation 4 Equality (G4E) webinar. The webinar was hosted by Hollie Sabourin (she/her), a Senior Project Officer with NWAC, with help from Senior Researcher Elgin Pecjak (he/him). The webinar discussed the importance of intergenerational connections and addressed the importance of discussing gender inequality across all generations.

The webinar featured one of our G4E Youth Leaders/ Gender Decolonizers Keyhew Gopher (he/him/they), a proud Nehiyaw Cree from Saulteaux First Nation, and NWAC Knowledge Keeper Elaine Kicknosway (Qwe/she), a member of Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation in Northern Saskatchewan, and of Wolf Clan.

The webinar touched on the importance of thinking about barriers that can cause separation between generations, such as COVID-19, intergenerational trauma, and the ongoing influence of Western norms.



Six Gender Decolonizers share stories at NWAC's Resiliency Lodge

Health Unit: The importance of intergenerational connections - CONT.

Hollie's presentation informed Indigenous youth about ways they can reconnect with older generations and the importance of providing education and understanding whenever possible. She spoke about the important work being done through the G4E project, including through NWACs social media platforms, the G4E website reboot, and the four-day Indigenous Youth Leadership Summit in August, which was attended by our six Youth Leader/Gender Decolonizers. Hollie provided a safe and generous space for individuals of all generations to talk about how to rebuild relationships during hard times while also understanding the difficulties that families and communities continue to experience.

The webinar was a huge success and provided youth with tools for rekindling communities and intergenerational connection.



Gender Decolonizer Keyhew Gopher
(he/him) spoke at the webinar



**Generation
4 Equality**

Executive Policy: Shared learning on 2SLGBTQQIA+ perspectives

To facilitate interconnectedness, knowledge sharing, and opportunities to be present and unwind with one another, NWAC's internal 2SLGBTQQIA+ Advisory Committee has been hosting biweekly, informal coffee chats with NWAC staff since mid-September.

Coffee chats provide an opportunity to take a break and connect with colleagues, seek informal peer support, and learn and grow alongside fellow 2SLGBTQQIA+ colleagues within NWAC. An hour long, the coffee chats are open to all members of the NWAC community, regardless of identity, organizational role, or geographic location.

The goal of this initiative is to help staff build community and relationships with one another in a space that is safe, inclusive, constructive, and collaborative.





Environment Team:

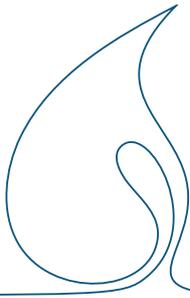
Focus on navigable waters and water carriers

Canadian Navigable Waters Act

The two-year project funded by Transport Canada on the [Canadian Navigable Waters Act](#) has revealed some interesting insights from the perspectives of Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people that Transport Canada can draw on in developing a proposed approach for adding a navigable waters [schedule](#) to the Act.

NWAC's recommendations to Transport Canada are as follows:

1. **Navigable waters planning processes should adopt a whole of government participatory approach.**
 - Decisions should be based on the full consultation and involvement of government departments such as the Impact Assessment Agency, Environment and Climate Change Canada, and Department of Fisheries and Oceans.



Environment Team: Focus on navigable waters and water carriers - CONT.

2. **Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people must be involved in the co-management of navigable waters, as navigable waters have multiple uses.**
 - Objectives and priorities for navigable waters should be established collaboratively with Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people in a manner that respects: the ecological potential and social needs of these constituents; the ecological integrity of the aquatic habitat; and the social expectations and demands for consumptive and non-consumptive values to Indigenous rights.
3. **Centralize Indigenous knowledge in the shared decision-making process when developing and executing plans for navigable waters.**
 - Indigenous knowledge systems and Western science should be valued and respected equally, used to inform and complement one another, and integrated in a collaborative system of stewardship.

For more information on the **Canadian Navigable Waters Act project**, contact Vilbert Vabi, NWAC's Senior Policy Advisor on the Environment, at vvabi@nwac.ca.



Environment Team: Focus on navigable waters and water carriers - CONT.

Water Carriers Phase 2

Since our last update, all Sharing Circles related to the **Water Carriers Phase Two Project** have been completed. We are now in the documentation and information dissemination phase.

The Sharing Circle sessions gave us significant insight, which will be used to empower Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people on matters related to climate change and water security.

Key insights from the Sharing Circles are outlined below:

- Indigenous women's groups are required in each community to influence decision-making on water-related issues.
- Education on the issues and possible practices for solutions are important for the long-term sustainability of water and the environment in Indigenous communities.
- Increased decision-making power should be provided to Indigenous communities on any developments near their community and reserve.
- Increased advocacy for the protection of water and the environment is required by Indigenous communities and their community members.
- Leadership roles should be increased for women in their communities such that their voices can be heard.

For more information on the **Water Carriers Phase 2 project**, contact Samiz Sunesara, NWAC's Policy Officer on the Environment, at ssunesara@nwac.ca.



Labour and Employment Policy Unit focuses on employment equity

As the largest national Indigenous organization dedicated to the well-being of all Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people in Canada, NWAC is uniquely positioned to respond to the realities faced by Indigenous women and gender-diverse people, and the federally regulated workplaces that employ them.

At NWAC, we strive to gather input, advice, and recommendations from Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse peoples into processes that impact their lives and their work environments. Legislation and policy related to the Employment Equity Act is among these important topics.

In partnership with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), NWAC took part in the Employment Equity Project. The project was part of a larger initiative supporting the work of the Employment Equity Act Review Task Force. The task force was made up of industry experts from different backgrounds, who are reviewing the Employment Equity Act and providing advice on modernizing and strengthening the federal employment equity framework.

Water, Fish, and Climate Issues Continue to Be Focus of Environment Unit - CONT.

Through the project, NWAC was pleased to be given the opportunity to highlight and apprise the federal task force of the many unique perspectives of Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse workers, as well as coordinate opportunities for their collective voices to be heard.

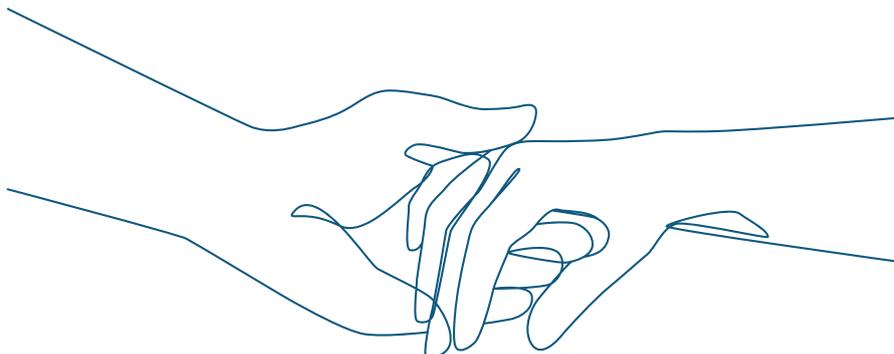
The Employment Equity Project involved the following activities:

- literature review
- engagement sessions
- roundtable session
- communication products
- final report with recommendations

Additionally, NWAC was asked to meet with the task force to present our findings and participate in a question-and-answer session.

Some of our key findings from the project:

- Ongoing involvement and inclusion in the development of changes to the Employment Equity Act as it relates to issues impacting Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people
- Increased mental health supports for Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse workers
- Normalize seeking help
- Develop strong legislation and enforcement mechanisms, which are supported by strong communications campaigns
- Value of networking and mentorship





Economic Development Team: Promoting Indigenous entrepreneurs

The Economic Development Team has almost completed the second phase of our advocacy work on promoting the involvement of Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse entrepreneurs in the federal government's **\$50-million Investment Readiness Program (IRP)**.

In accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its commitment to "leave no one behind," the federal government launched IRP in 2019, as part of its Social Innovation and Social Finance Strategy. IRP is designed to help build the capacity of social purpose organizations (SPOs) (comprising charities, non-profits, social enterprises, for-profit enterprises, and co-operatives, among others) to participate in the social finance market and enhance their positive impact in their communities. An intersectional analysis revealed that Indigenous communities are represented in six of the eight groups prioritized by the program.

Economic Development Team: Promoting Indigenous entrepreneurs - CONT

IRP is delivered by 27 organizations clustered in five “readiness support partners” (which provide funding to the SPOs) and 22 ecosystem builders (who help make projects more inclusive and integrated). As one of the 22 IRP ecosystem builders and as part of the second phase, NWAC has delivered 10 webinars with Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse entrepreneurs regardless of residence (for example, located on- and off-reserve) and training sessions with various SPOs across Canada.

The first five sessions held with **86 Indigenous entrepreneurs and small business owners** helped build an in-depth understanding of their funding needs, the barriers they face in trying to start or expand their business, and how their needs can be met in a culturally responsive and non-discriminative way.

NWAC also used the webinars to raise awareness and enhance understanding of the IRP initiative (for example, the eligibility criteria, requirements, and general steps for applying for IRP funds).

While interest by Indigenous entrepreneurs in IRP was high, many Indigenous entrepreneurs and small business owners who participated were not eligible for this fund. The sessions and survey results revealed a big gap between the inclusive and equity principles announced by IRP and the unique cultural, financial, and business needs of Indigenous entrepreneurs that are outside the purview of this program, even though it aims to be inclusive. We also noted that Indigenous women entrepreneurs could not perceive the social and cultural impacts (either quantitative or qualitative) of IRP in their communities.



The results of this funding initiative—680 projects were funded—were presented at a national partners meeting in October 2022. However, we did not get an accurate picture, with clear data, on the percentage of Indigenous communities that benefited from IRP grant funds or on the number of SPOs led by Indigenous women (regardless of geographic residence).

As a leader of political voices of Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people across Canada, NWAC is advocating for changes to the grant program's design, eligibility, and requirements. Our goal is for a more flexible program that is better adapted to the needs of Indigenous entrepreneurs. Given the significant social, cultural, and economic impact created by Indigenous women entrepreneurs in their communities, we have asked for a gender equity approach.

IRP should focus on strategies to support Indigenous women-led enterprises, particularly those who are sole proprietors on- and off-reserve; to develop alternative funding options for micro-owned businesses; and to support the start-up and operation of Indigenous women businesses.

We also held another series of four webinars with **53 different SPOs**—most of them not involved with or connected to IRP. The webinars were designed to build the capacity of SPOs members interested in helping Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse entrepreneurs overcome the multiple entrepreneurship barriers they face. The webinars also helped participants identify ways that their SPOs could promote the inclusion and participation of Indigenous entrepreneurs in the program.



Many of these participants had never heard about IRP. Raising their awareness of the entrepreneurial barriers affecting Indigenous entrepreneurs and their unique needs can lead to the SPOs better supporting Indigenous entrepreneurs through the application process.

- Our work in this area points to the need for more support, to ensure Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse entrepreneurs will benefit from this federal initiative.
- NWAC recognizes that this is a recent federal initiative, and more time is needed for organizations, communities, and entrepreneurs to develop networks and relations on investment readiness linked to social innovation and social finance policy.



Of note: The 10-member IRP team visited the Social and Economic Innovation Centre on October 19. Our team also holds monthly meetings with the IRP team to discuss the key points identified from the webinars. Our ultimate goal is to promote a better understanding of Indigenous entrepreneurs and to identify how IRP could be more responsive to their particular needs.

Great strides have been made, and our hope is that the voice of Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse entrepreneurs and small owners may be heard, and changes made to the program to better meet their needs.



Funded by
Canada



NEW TOOLS AND
CAMPAIGNS,
NEW FOLLOWERS,
LARGER REACH

Communications and Marketing Team: New tools and campaigns, new followers, larger reach

New campaigns for reaching NWAC's grassroots members

The communications team has launched several new web portals and digital campaigns to highlight significant functions and activities undertaken by the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC).

For example, this fall we created a new donation page for the Wabanaki Resiliency Lodge and ran a social media campaign to help raise funds. Our target is to raise **\$60,000** of the **\$160,000** needed to complete phase one of the lodge renovations.



Communications and Marketing Team: New tools and campaigns, new followers, larger reach - CONT.



We launched a new **From the desk of the CEO** page. This new page will house all of the CEO reports and messaging, including stories from the **Kci-Niwesq** magazine and **Shining the Spotlight** newsletter.

The team spearheaded a major campaign for National Indigenous Veterans Day, which is held every year on November 8. As part of this campaign, we released a **press release** urging Canadians to honour the valour, sacrifice, and bravery of Indigenous Peoples who have served in defence of Canada.

The team also highlighted the naming of our CEO, Lynne Groulx, as one of the four top CEOs in Canada in late October. We **announced** her win at Canada's Top 100 Most Powerful Women in Canada, by the Women's Executive Network Diversity Council of Canada.

As always, the team addresses emerging issues in the news along with being proactive externally by developing and issuing news releases and statements. These tools help place the spotlight on key issues that impact grassroots Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, transgender, and gender-diverse people that NWAC represents.

For example, in mid-October we issued a statement and press release **demanding** NWAC be given a say in the composition of a new council on reconciliation (**French version**) when NWAC appeared before the House of Common's Standing Committee on Indigenous Northern Affairs. We were successful in our ask!

In early November, we released a **statement** on increased incarceration rates of Indigenous women—particularly for maximum-security prisoners, which account for nearly 65 percent—as outlined in the annual report of the Correctional Investigator of Canada. (**French version**)



NWAC's social media reach

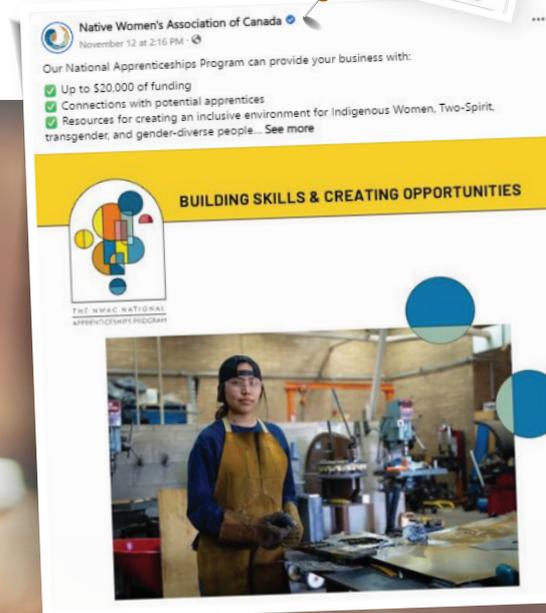
Our social media presence continues to grow. In total, our social media platforms have gained 11,862 followers.

Over the month of November, our overall reach totalled nearly 2 million users (1,853,419), with Facebook and Instagram showing the most engagement during this 30-day period.

On Instagram, our most popular Indigenous Veterans Day post garnered 905 shares, reaching 2,491 people, 18 percent of which were not following NWAC. This resulted in an increase of 66 new followers. On Facebook, posts from this campaign reached 4,935 accounts, 5,020 impressions, and 248 engagements.

The announcement of Ms. Groulx as one of Canada's top CEOs reached 1,243 people on Instagram, 6 percent of whom did not follow NWAC, and gained us a new follower. After developing a new microsite for our new National Apprenticeships Program, we promoted the program using Twitter and LinkedIn. The posts gained traction on both platforms, with 1,531 impressions on Twitter. LinkedIn saw 1,083 impressions, 82 engagements and 42 clicks.

Follow us on our various social media platforms to stay up to date on all of NWAC's happenings and initiatives! Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), and [LinkTree](#). Also be sure to [subscribe](#) to our magazine, [Kci-Niwesq](#).



SHINING THE SPOTLIGHT

NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA NEWSLETTER

*Thank you
for reading*

