

**NEW INITIATIVES • ISSUE 14 • FEB/MAR 2023** 





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#### Message from the CEO

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is a national Indigenous organization representing the political voices of Indigenous Women, Girls, Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Gender-Diverse+ (WG2STGD+) People in Canada. We were founded on the collective goal to enhance, promote, and foster their social, economic, cultural, and political well-being within their respective communities and Canada societies.

Everything we do, every file we work on, revolves around trying to effect transformational change. I am talking about the type of cultural and societal change that will transform the lives of the people we represent; that will lift them out of poverty, empower them to be all they can be in their homelife, their community, their work life, and society at large.

In this issue of our newsletter Shining the Spotlight, you will read about some of our national and international initiatives. There's the RED Path Project, which is designed to empower Indigenous Women who are currently incarcerated, with the goal to promote harm reduction strategies and healthy sexuality and relationships, and to educate employees federal correctional institutions through trauma-informed, evidencebased, culturally competent training. Culturally relevant gender-based analysis (CRGBA+) is at the heart of our work, and we are encouraging its use across all our policy areas and by federal and provincial/territorial decision-makers. We are also integrating the Seven Grandfather Teachings into our operations and external advocacy efforts. The social development team continues to press forward on revitalizing Indigenous languages and to enhance knowledge and understanding among



Message from the CEO (CONT.)

disparate groups, including youth across Turtle Island. We are also developing resources such as the Circle of Care Toolkit for Indigenous People living with dementia and their caregivers.

Transformational change also means a shift in the business culture of an organization resulting from a change in the underlying strategy and processes that the organization has used in the past.

NWAC has been in existence for close to half a century, and during all this time, we have yet to receive stable core funding from the federal government. Projects to date have been accomplished through project-based funding, along with the sheer grit and hard work of NWAC's board of directors, senior management, and dedicated staff.

To this end, NWAC has once again prepared a budget proposal to the government for operational funding in increments of 10-year blocks. We also have an "ask" into Infrastructure Canada to support the rollout of land-based healing lodges in B.C., Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.

As always, NWAC continues to make our voice heard on multiple fronts—ever mindful that we speak for all Indigenous Women, Girls, 2SLGBTQQAI+ People, and their families and communities.









# Intersections, Languages, and Youth: Elevating Voices and Integrating Culture and Language

Intersections: 2SLGBTQQIA+ and Indigenous Identities features the wisdom and personal journeys of Two-Spirit Knowledge Keepers and Elders. The social development team NWAC, which produced this resource with support from the Department of Canadian Heritage, hopes their messages enhance knowledge and understanding of Indigenous languages and culture and the intersections with 2SLGBTQQIA+ identities.

Available as a booklet in both digital and print forms, as well as a video, Intersections is an educational resource targeted to Indigenous 2SLGBTQQIA+

youth. It was developed with critical input from Two-Spirit individuals who took part in engagement sessions and agreed to be interviewed.

**The goal is twofold:** elevate the voices of Indigenous 2SLGBTQQIA+ People by sharing their experiences; and contribute to the healing process by reconnecting youth to their language and culture.

#### About Languages Now

When it comes to promoting Indigenous languages, staff spent the winter completing language engagements with Indigenous Women, Girls, Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Gender-Diverse+ (WG2STGD+) People. We recorded videos that honour and promote Indigenous languages. Learning their language helps a person heal and reconnect to their culture and promotes a sense of belonging.

NWAC's team has completed many language and heritage videos (these



Intersections, Languages, and Youth: Elevating Voices and Integrating Culture and Language (CONT.)

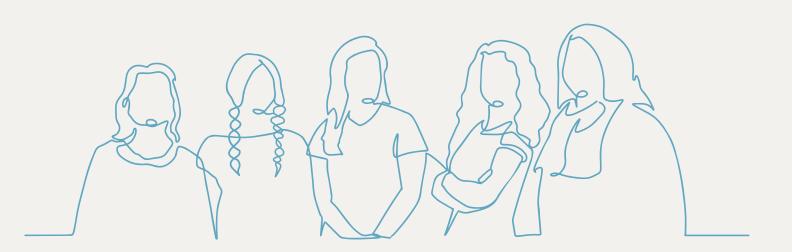
are posted online)—all part of About Languages Now, the name of our languages program. The recent release of three small but impactful videos enhances the collection from across Turtle Island and Inuit Nunangat, which celebrates the three national languages Inuit, Métis, and Algonquin. The three new videos promote the Mittsaanut, La Laang, and Noongom languages.

Our continuing work on the About Languages Now project is a direct response to the language revitalization directives contained in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations.

We are also connecting with grassroots organizations and reserve communities to hold holistic circles and around-the-fire gatherings. These types of organic gatherings have proven to be effective and impactful in teaching Indigenous languages.

#### **Uniting Indigenous Youth Voices**

The National Youth Council is excited to announce that we have begun work on a three-year strategic plan. The Council has been engaging with Indigenous youth all over Turtle Island through Uniting Indigenous Voices virtual sessions and surveys. Having completed our research, we are now arranging gatherings at NWAC headquarters. These gatherings will create culturally safe meeting spaces to continue our work on the strategic plan while also integrating culture and language.







# Spotlight on Improving Accessibility and Promoting Affordable Housing

#### **Indigenous Navigators Project**

Funded by the Accessible Canada Directorate of Employment and Social Development Canada, NWAC is exploring the idea of a new Indigenous Navigator function. The goal of this project is to improve the availability of information and supports for Indigenous people living with disabilities.

A literature review is in progress, and we are recruiting participants for national online roundtables/sharing circles. These will be held on April 4, 5, 18, and 20 from 12:30–2:30 p.m. EST.

Over the course of these sessions, we hope to host up to 100 Indigenous

Women, Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Gender-Diverse+ People from across Canada who live with a disability and who have lived, wish to live, or currently live on-reserve. The sessions will also be open to service providers that provide services to Indigenous People living with disabilities.

Participants in these sessions will be asked about their experiences in trying to get information, supports, and resources. NWAC hopes to identify needs and barriers to accessibility and develop recommendations.

To preregister for a session, please contact us by email: fabdi@nwac.ca. Indicate in the email the following:

- the session date that you prefer
- your mailing address
- your accommodation needs in order to participate in the online session



Spotlight on Improving Accessibility and Promoting Affordable Housing (CONT.)

NWAC is providing a \$50 honorarium to each participant who attends and provides input during the roundtable and/or through a Google Form afterward. The project's final report will be published in summer 2023.

In addition to a literature review and cross-jurisdictional scan, we launched a national online survey with 100 respondents. The survey findings are outlined in English and French fact sheets.

#### **NWAC's Housing Initiatives**

NWAC is involved in several research projects funded by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate. For example, we are researching and developing a sustainable, affordable, and culturally appropriate housing model for Indigenous Women, Girls, Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Gender-Diverse+People.

This research will be used to develop a preliminary design for the housing model in the Stage I final report. We hope to get additional funding soon to continue this important work in Stage 2. More information on other housing projects will follow in a future edition of the newsletter.









#### Legal Affairs & Justice Unit: A Focus on the Seven Grandfather Teachings

The Legal Affairs & Justice Unit remains dedicated to advocating for the rights, security, and welfare of Indigenous women. To help achieve these goals, we are implementing the Seven Grandfather Teachings into our advocacy efforts. The Seven Grandfather Teachings—Wisdom, Love, Respect, Bravery, Honesty, Humility, and Truth—are fundamental to our mission as they place a strong emphasis on respect for one's surroundings, other peoples, and the spiritual world.

The Seven Grandfather Teachings are Anishinaabe principles from which NWAC President Carol McBride has promised to lead the organization. The unit engaged in fulsome research to build internal documents to guide us in engaging the

Seven Grandfather Teachings in our advocacy and workplace relationships. Our learning is grounded in President McBride's guidance and in Eddie Benton-Benai's *The Mishomis Book: The Book of the Ojibway.* 

As guiding principles in our advocacy work to advance the rights of Indigenous Women, Girls, Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Gender-Diverse (WG2STGD+) People in areas such as child welfare, health care, education, and self-determination, NWAC is taking care to embed these teachings into both our daily work and into the solutions we develop.

The unit's recognition of the Seven Grandfather Teachings is a modest yet key step in our work to defend the collective rights of Indigenous WG2STGD+ People. The intentional application of these ideas may be seen in the way we communicate internally and externally, as well as in how we keep these teachings in mind while engaged in group discussions. The Seven Grandfather Teachings are a poignant



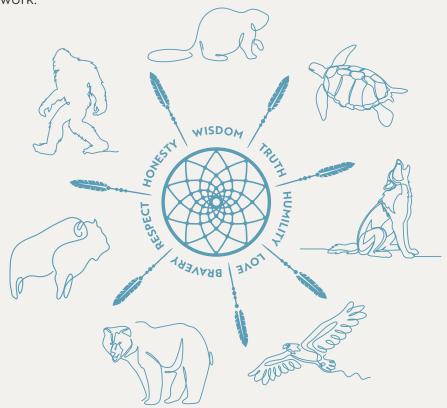
Legal Affairs & Justice Unit: A Focus on the Seven Grandfather Teachings (CONT.)

means of reminding us of our shared responsibility to respect, preserve, and defend the cultures, traditions, and values of Indigenous Peoples. The teachings remind us of our shared responsibility to make sure Indigenous WG2STGD+People are valued, empowered, and safe.

The unit is currently developing further strategies and plans to ensure that the Seven Grandfather Teachings are fully implemented in all our efforts. We are taking into account the complex issues that Indigenous WG2STGD+ People face and are creating comprehensive plans to address these issues with the utmost care and respect. To ensure that the plans are effective in providing tangible and meaningful outcomes, we are actively engaging Indigenous WG2STGD+ People, their communities, and decision-makers in our daily work.

Our goal is for the Seven Grandfather Teachings to permeate our advocacy and shape our efforts in a meaningful way that protects, respects, and advances the rights of Indigenous WG2STGD+ People. We believe that by doing this, we will be able to create the changes necessary to ensure that the Indigenous Women of today and tomorrow are secure, safe, and respected.

To learn more about the Legal Affairs & Justice Unit's work, please visit our policy section for the latest updates on projects and initiatives.







# The Bridge Between Canada and the Rest of the Americas

The signing of the Accord with the Government of Canada in 2019 recognized NWAC as a full participant in decision-making processes both nationally and internationally. This Accord ensures that NWAC has a voice in addressing policy priorities that directly impact the lives and rights of Indigenous Women and 2SLGBTQQAI+ People.

The International Unit has been hard at work implementing the initiatives outlined in our workplan to develop cooperation, economic promotion, and cultural exchange activities with a focus on women's empowerment.

As a result, our tides with the Americas are strengthening and growing!

NWAC has been participating every Saturday in virtual training sessions with

the Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas (ECMIA). The training in economic justice aims to analyze how the current hegemonic system functions and identify the possible paths towards economic justice. It proposes to work on defining key concepts on economic justice from the perspective of indigenous women and youth of the Americas and to outline measures to achieve economic justice.

Also, at our Social, Economic and Cultural Innovation Centre, we have been meeting with members of Global Affairs Canada, ambassadors, and Indigenous leaders from around the world to coorganize and launch special initiatives aimed at Indigenous businesses across the Americas. Meetings also represent and opportunity to educate leaders about Indigenous culture and history.

We aim to establish mechanisms of exchanges between NWAC and international organizations, multilateral organisms, embassies, and Global Affairs Canada to share experiences, programs, initiatives, and projects that promote and



The Bridge Between Canada and the Rest of the Americas (CONT.)

develop the social, economic, cultural, and political well-being of Indigenous Peoples in the Americas.

#### Radio Canada Interview

On Monday, January 16, Chanel Blouin, a policy advisor in the MMIWG department was interviewed by Radio Canada about the disproportionate and distressing number of Indigenous WG2STGD people that are victims of humantrafficking. The interview also focused on the past and ongoing structural and institutional factors contributing to this issue, including the child welfare system, overincarceration, and lack of culturally relevant resources. Importantly, in the interview Chanel highlighted NWAC's response to this issue through our Safe Passage website and our continuing efforts to advocate for a national MMIWG alert system.



Our CEO met with the Ambassador of Guatemala, members of the Embassy of Mexico, and Mexican Indigenous leaders to share experiences.



NWAC's CEO meets with protocol officers from the International and Interparliamentary Affairs Committee of Canada to talk about our new Social, Economic and Cultural Innovation Centre.



NWAC's CEO Lynne Groulx and the Ambassador of El Salvador, Ricardo Cisneros, talked about areas of common interest and identified activities for 2023 to promote handicrafts, textiles, accessories, and coffee from El Salvador. Plans are also being developed to exchange knowledge and experiences among our Indigenous Peoples, as well as initiatives that promote women's empowerment and entrepreneurship.







### Walking the RED Path Project:

Re-forging Connections, Empowering Indigenous Women, and Driving Change

NWAC's Health Unit works on a number of projects designed to support Indigenous Women, Girls, Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Gender-Diverse People. One such project is the RED Path Project: Re-forging Connections, Empowering Indigenous Women to Heal, and Driving Change for a Healthy Future. RED Path is a long-term project funded through the Public Health Agency of Canada's (PHAC) Community Action Fund. We are currently in the early stages of Phase Two.

RED Path's focus is on providing support to those who are currently incarcerated. Indigenous Women, Girls, Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Gender-Diverse People are given information on sexually

transmitted and blood-borne infections (STBBIs), healthy relationships sexuality, and resources and supports that are available to them. We want to improve their health outcomes while they are incarcerated and afterwards, when they are released, in order to prevent further transmission of STBBIs. Through the RED Path project, NWAC also wants to identify and reduce barriers to health and social services, implement prevention and harm reduction strategies, promote healthy sexuality and relationships, and prioritize Traditional Knowledge and healing.

In Phase Two, our focus is on developing trauma-informed, evidence-based, culturally competent training for employees of federal correctional institutions, so they may provide better support to incarcerated Indigenous individuals.

To accomplish this, we are offering a number of collaborative activities, including an interactive workshop designed by and for Indigenous Women, Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Gender-



Walking the RED Path Project: Re-forging Connections, Empowering Indigenous Women, and Driving Change (CONT.)

Diverse People. The workshop is divided into four parts: Indigenous histories and healthy relationships 101, HIV and HCV 101, STBBI prevention and harm reeducation 101, and Traditional healing and supports 101.

We are also holding sharing circles, where incarcerated Indigenous Women, Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Gender-Diverse People can discuss and explain their thoughts on barriers to accessing health and support services, their current knowledge and understanding of risk factors that lead to the transmission of STBBIs, and the barriers that prevent individuals from adopting personal behaviours that will help prevent the transmission of STBBIs.

In the staff consultation group sessions, we hope to identify:

- employees' current knowledge and understanding of the overall experiences of the people that **NWAC** represents
- the barriers that those who are currently incarcerated in federal institutions face regarding navigating services, as well as their unmet needs and ability to access existing health and social support services

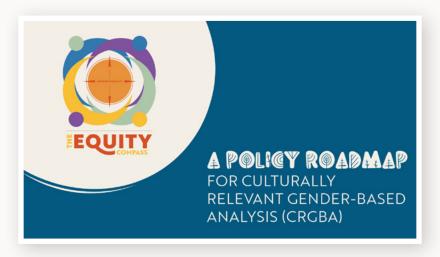


February was the RED Path Team's first site visit during Phase Two and the first inperson visit since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The team travelled across Turtle Island to S'olh Temexw, the Traditional territory of the Stó:lō People, also known as Abbotsford, British Columbia, where the Fraser Valley Institution for Women is located. Participants shared their stories and experiences before and during incarceration as well as their plans upon release. Fraser Valley Institution's Elder joined the RED Path team.

The RED Path team will be visiting another six federally regulated correctional facilities across Turtle Island this year. We are grateful that Indigenous Women, Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Gender-Diverse People who are incarcerated are entrusting us with their stories, experiences, and perspectives. We will continue to work to empower those currently incarcerated and work to amplify these voices further.







#### Roadmap for Culturally Relevant Gender-Based Analysis (CRGBA)

NWAC's executive policy team continues to expand the collection of resources on culturally relevant gender-based analysis (CRGBA) to foster empowerment and agency for Indigenous Women, Girls, Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Gender-Diverse+ (WG2STGD+) People and their communities. Our ongoing work on CRGBA has culminated in the publication of Culturally Relevant Gender-Based Analysis: A Roadmap for Policy Development. This resource was developed with the generous feedback provided by Indigenous advocates, community members, policy experts, and researchers through three sharing circles conducted in the spring of 2022.

The policy roadmap is an accessible and practical guide to applying the CRGBA framework across policy areas. Some

resources featured in the roadmap include case studies and activities designed to facilitate critical reflection.

Originally developed in 2007, the CRGBA framework is at the heart of NWAC's work and establishes an approach that is built on a foundation that includes Indigenous WG2STGD+ People from all walks of life. The guiding concepts of the framework are intersectional, traumainformed, Indigenous-focused and -led, and distinctions-based to ensure the respectful representation of the individuals and communities that NWAC supports.

The team plans to publish more CRGBA resources to help key stakeholders employ CRGBA in their work, which is continually evolving to include new information and best practices. As we approach a new fiscal year, NWAC looks forward to upholding our commitments to self-determination and sovereignty for all Indigenous WG2STGD+ People and Nations across Turtle Island and Inuit Nunangat.









# Climate Change and Water Issues on the Global Stage

#### IPCC-58

Having returned from staging a successful side event at COP 15, NWAC was invited to be a part of the Canadian delegation to the 58th session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC-58. The session took place in Interlaken, Switzerland, from March 13 to 17, 2023. During IPCC-58, the intergovernmental panel filed its Sixth Assessment Report, AR-6. The report contains three special reports, a methodology report, three working group reports, and a final synthesis report. The panel will be reviewing the final synthesis report line by line.

The synthesis report is scheduled to be released some time in March 2023. It will provide an overview of the most up-to-date climate change knowledge and will highlight new findings since the publication of IPCC's Assessment Report, AR-5, in 2014.

IPCC's assessment reports are meant to be policy-relevant but not policy-prescriptive. A simpler way of understanding this is that IPCC works to inform global leaders of the reality of climate change. However, it is up to those global leaders to determine how they will use this information when making decisions.

#### **UN-Water Conference**

NWAC was also invited to attend the UN Water Conference in New York from March 22 to 24 as part of the Canadian delegation. "The UN 2023 Water Conference will lead to "a bold Water Action Agenda that gives our world's lifeblood the commitment it deserves," said António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations. An update on NWAC's participation at this conference will be provided in a later newsletter.







## Dementia Research Update:

### Supporting a Circle of Care

The Native Women's Association of Canada's aging and dementia programs provide evidence-based and culturally appropriate support to Indigenous people living with dementia and their caregivers. "Supporting a Circle of Care: A Culturally Informed Support Group and Toolkit for Indigenous Caregivers of People Living with Dementia", a multi-year project funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada's Dementia Community Investment, was created to provide education and support to Indigenous caregivers of loved ones with dementia. The project is in its final phase and will conclude at the end of March.

Over the last decade, dementia has increased dramatically in Indigenous communities. Dementia care in these communities is often provided within

the home, typically by a family member. Though rewarding, caregiving can also be very demanding on the caregiver's mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being. Caregivers frequently report suffering from sleep issues, anxiety, depression, burnout, feelings of frustration and social isolation, and financial challenges.

Through the Circle of Care project, caregivers have been given the support and information they need to continue caring for their loved ones while prioritizing their own well-being. Resources developed through project were designed to improve their mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being, which then enhances their ability to care for loved ones. For example, the Circle of Care Toolkit provides tips and strategies on self-care, understanding a loved one's needs, and developing a support network. There are also resources to help caregivers plan ahead, record important information, and document aspects of their journey with their loved ones.



Dementia Research Update: Supporting a Circle of Care (CONT.)

Ensuring the inclusion of Indigenous values, beliefs, and traditions through engagement is at the heart of Circle of Care. Between January and March, NWAC hosted virtual sharing circles for caregivers. Circles were facilitated by Dr. Danielle Alcock, Anishinaabe Kwe and member of Chippewas of Rama First Nation. In addition to her expertise on memory loss, Dr. Alcock has many years of experience as a caregiver. Also in attendance was Knowledge Keeper Crystal Semanagis, who opened and closed the circles in a good way, burned medicines throughout the sessions, and provided additional support to participants. Grounding the circles in this way allowed participants to feel comfortable and connected to one another, which was central to the creation of supportive healing spaces.

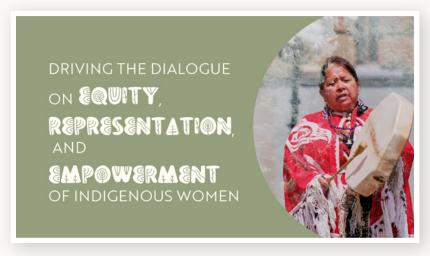
Before taking part in the sharing circles, participants were given an opportunity to review and provide feedback on materials from the Circle of Care Toolkit. An updated version will be completed and made available on NWAC's Aging and Dementia webpage later this spring. The Toolkit will also be printed and distributed through NWAC's provincial and territorial member associations (PTMAS), further empowering caregivers to expand their circle of care, mitigate the stress and burden they experience, and thus improve the care their loved ones receive.

These resources form part of NWAC's ongoing commitment to improving the lives of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people and, by extension, to the well-being and resilience of Indigenous communities.









# Driving the dialogue on equity, representation, and empowerment of Indigenous Women



In International Women's Day on March 8, we launched a week-long campaign called #ChangetheBill. The project reimagines \$20 banknotes that celebrate the strength, resilience, and impact that Indigenous women have made on their communities and across Canada. We invited our followers to embrace equity and take a stand for better representation of Indigenous Women, Girls, Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Gender-Diverse People by "changing the bill." The campaign petitioning to have an Indigenous woman on our currency collected more than 20,000 signatures.

As an accredited member of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, NWAC attended the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York. We covered the participation of NWAC's delegates in high-level discussions during this significant event through our social media channels and press statements (French here).

In early March, we published a press release (also in French) noting that although some progress has been made to align Canada's laws with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the country is still "failing miserably in addressing the ongoing MMIWG[2S+] genocide." The statement was made while UN Special Rapporteur José Francisco Calí Tzay was on a 10-day tour of Canada investigating the rights of Indigenous Peoples. He will present his findings to the upcoming UN Human Rights Council in September 2023.

We recently published the 17th edition of Kci-Niwesq magazine exploring the theme of economic resilience for Indigenous Women. We highlighted the need for better access to resources, technologies, and education for Indigenous Peoples so



they may acquire crucial skills needed for high-demand and high-paying jobs. This issue also celebrated some of the many ways Indigenous Women, Girls, Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Gender-Diverse People achieve economic success.

Our campaigns and events generated 6,123 post-link clicks across social media, which is **up 49 percent** compared to January's performance (Feb. 1–28, 2023). Our Black History Month campaign generated 68,806 impressions, 3,671 engagements, and 1,227 video views. The week-long International Women's Day campaign generated 16,574 engagements and 1,920 video views, which is 179 percent higher than the previous week (Feb. 21-28).

Be sure to follow us on socials to stay up to date on all of NWAC's happenings and initiatives! Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and LinkTree, and be sure to subscribe to our magazine, Kci-Niwesq.















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NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA