

SHINING THE SPOTLIGHT

NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA NEWSLETTER

NEW INITIATIVES • ISSUE 03 • SEPTEMBER 2021



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A Message from the CEO

July was a month focused on growth—growing the voices of Indigenous women politically, growing programs and partnerships that seek to support and empower Indigenous women, and preparing NWAC for future growth.

ENGAGING IN ADVOCACY

July was an historic month for Indigenous women in politics with the appointment of the first Indigenous Governor General in Canada. Mary Simon, a strong Inuk woman and life-long advocate for the rights of Indigenous Peoples, will undoubtedly excel in this prestigious role and we look forward to having more positions in government held by Indigenous women. However, while we were celebrating this historic appointment, others were filing complaints over Simon's inability to speak French.



This was not an issue of whether or not Simon was qualified to hold this position; it was an issue that is rooted in the government's colonial definition of official languages. Over the course of July, I advocated for Indigenous languages to be recognized as official languages, removing barriers for Indigenous people entering politics and protecting Indigenous languages. I spoke in support of Mary Simon in interviews with a number of media outlets, including iPolitics and Radio Canada.

I also made a statement when Jody Wilson-Raybould announced she would not seek re-election, speaking out about supporting Indigenous women in politics. Indigenous women are under-represented politically, and if strong Indigenous women politicians, like Wilson-Raybould, are not supported in their roles, then reaching reconciliation will be much more difficult. Political parties need to support Indigenous politicians, and I hope we see more Indigenous women candidates in the upcoming federal election.

With these recent events, it is more important than ever for Indigenous women and gender-diverse people to make their voices heard at the voting polls—and thus effect change at the government level. NWAC will be launching a significant voting campaign

A Message from the CEO (CONT.)

to provide information on voting and party platforms so Indigenous women and gender-diverse people have the resources and information they need to use their voice at the polls. Indigenous women need to be involved in all areas of politics, including the vote.

BUILDING PTMA CAPACITY

In July, NWAC engaged with PTMAs to bring forward suggestions on NWAC's by-laws and governance. NWAC has been operating for 47 years and by-laws are in need of review to ensure consistency, to take into account the increase in virtual work, and to consider necessary changes to NWAC's governance as the organization grows. This preliminary work has included consultations with experts in governance. Proposed changes will be brought to NWAC's annual assembly in the fall for implementation, with the goal to strengthen NWAC's governance.

In addition to this, NWAC has been conducting ongoing work with the Alberta and Prince Edward Island PTMAs on the development of resiliency lodges in their regions. This work, while ongoing, is crucial to addressing the Calls for Justice outlined in the National Inquiry's Final Report and in providing accessible, in-person support to Indigenous women and gender-diverse people.

DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS

We are thrilled about a new partnership with TD Bank that has allowed NWAC to expand into a new area of service delivery. NWAC will be offering, with support from TD Bank, an Indigenous Women's Management Program (IWMP). This no-cost, barrier-free program will provide comprehensive practical management training, focusing on the basic skills that are needed for Indigenous women to move forward in management roles or in growing their own businesses. Led by experts and guided by Elders, this program, comprising 14 two-hour weekly sessions, will accept up to 200 participants and will be hosted online to allow for participation from across the country.

This program is the first of its kind. By integrating culturally appropriate teachings using the medicine wheel as the Indigenous lens to guide every session, this program pays particular attention to striking the right balance between mind and heart. There are four classes dedicated to striking this balance, and the program emphasizes the importance of caring for yourself in order to foster both personal and professional growth.

A Message from the CEO (CONT.)

NWAC is excited to move forward with TD Bank's support, and we look forward to implementing this ground-breaking program for Indigenous women in business.

NWAC TEAM

After over a year of working virtually, NWAC was able to host a series of staff strategic planning sessions and wellness retreats at our Resiliency Lodge in Chelsea, Quebec, for teams to get together and hold an in-person meeting, including staff in the legal and policy departments. At the policy team's staff retreat, staff were able to meet and discuss emerging policy areas, including residential schools, health, culturally relevant gender-based analysis (CRGBA), and climate change. Part of these discussions focused on developing and expanding training programs, including corporate and industry training on implementing CRGBA.

NWAC will continue to host staff wellness meetings and, as COVID-19 restrictions allow, to host more in-person team meetings so staff can engage with each other in person.

IN THIS EDITION...

In this edition of Shining the Spotlight, read about NWAC's exciting new project, Generation 4 Equality (G4E), which will celebrate the voices and experiences of Indigenous youth who are advocating for gender equality. In this issue, you can also read about the Indigenous Maternity Experiences Survey, ECCCO's Marine Safety and Oceans Protection Project, and NWAC's entrepreneur navigation program, #BeTheDrum. I hope you enjoy reading more about the work NWAC does to support Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people across the country.

Miigwetch, Thank you, Merci,

Lynne Groulx



Marine Safety, Oceans Protection, and Gender

Turtle Island and Inuit Nunangat are surrounded by three beautiful oceans and numerous major waterways that support the physical, cultural, social, and spiritual well-being of Indigenous communities. Harvesting, ceremony, recreation, and our non-human relations all rely on clean and safe waters. Water is life and a beloved relative.



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Marine waters also provide critical transportation routes. They connect communities and bring critical supplies to remote communities. They are also our front door to other countries. Billions of dollars of goods and natural resources pass through our coastal ports and pipelines serving all of Canada. All this marine traffic raises serious risks to the environment and human health. Marine coasts require thoughtful protections to keep all our relations safe, and to ensure emergency response services are available when things go wrong.

In our new report, NWAC explores Indigenous women-identified people's unique perspectives on marine safety. We hosted three regional engagement sessions—one for each coast. Indigenous women participants told us that men, especially harvesters (hunters, fishers, trappers), are usually the ones reviewing marine safety issues. First Nations women lamented the loss of their matrilineal structures, especially those communities where women are traditionally water protectors. All participants identified the lack of strong science education as a barrier to getting involved through fields like marine biology.



We value all the work men do for their communities, but women-identified people have plenty to offer, too. They can spot different environmental impacts because they often harvest different species than men (berries, sea plants, clams, etc.) and process the catch. They experience unique sexual risks around busy ports. They are often left feeling helpless as they await news of a loved one lost at sea, and unsupported when they get the worst news. The few women working in these areas do amazing work, but often feel they must always prove themselves. They want to support each other and encourage additional women to join them in marine safety employment.

Our report includes recommendations for marine safety. For example, industry should protect women from racism, sexism, and sexual violence by implementing changes to how boats are allowed to dock. Search-and-rescue operations should include support services for family members. The best way to make sure women-identified people's unique perspectives are heard is to bring them directly into the discussion and make sure the next generation of young girls can see that they have a role in protecting your waters.

Checkout our report Indigenous Women's Voices on Marine Safety and Oceans Protection .

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#BeTheDrum's Peer-to-Peer Groups

Through our system of support and guidance at #BeTheDrum, we have helped Indigenous women entrepreneurs thrive with their new or existing businesses.

Through our system of support and guidance at #BeTheDrum , we have helped Indigenous women entrepreneurs thrive with their new or existing businesses. Our network of support is especially helpful when navigating through an international pandemic as well as the many new challenges that all businesses face.

Those who join our program will be greeted by a team of dedicated Entrepreneur Navigators and Mentors. You will have access to relevant workshops, networking events, peer-to-peer groups, and our live social media Q&A sessions.

Our weekly peer-to-peer groups are one of the most frequent meetings we provide. They offer a safe environment for women to connect with our community and other Indigenous women entrepreneurs. It is a space where like-minded women can form an online community with entrepreneurs all over Canada.

We gather every Tuesday at 1:00 p.m. EST to discuss our goals, accomplishments, ideas, hardships, and victories. Meet our team and check out the sign-up process .



The NWACFund: Building Resilience to Unpredictable Government Funding

NWAC's Legal Unit is helping to establish and organize a new charity that will facilitate independent and sustainable financing of projects that contribute to NWAC's work and objectives.



Like all other national Indigenous organizations, NWAC is vulnerable to the discretionary funding decisions of the federal government. Whether the organization is able to undertake or continue projects and activities that work toward our purposes and objectives is often determined by the willingness of government departments and agencies to provide the requisite funding.

While NWAC has managed to successfully navigate a tumultuous and unpredictable public funding landscape over the last several fiscals, government funding of Indigenous, gender-focused projects is often impertinent to the relevant issues.

The NWACFund: Building Resilience to Unpredictable Government Funding
Diversifying away from funding dependency on the federal government will enable NWAC to undertake and continue projects and activities despite government unwillingness to contribute to the initiatives. It is for this reason that we have incorporated the NWACFund and are in the process of applying for its registration as a charitable organization.

The NWACFund, once registered as a charity, will be able to issue charitable tax receipts for donations that will be used to support projects and initiatives that work toward the shared objectives and visions the charity has with NWAC.

Expanding NWAC's revenue sources through cooperation with the new NWACFund is one component of the organization's ongoing efforts to mitigate the evolving and dynamic risks to the adequate and sustainable funding of Indigenous gender-focused initiatives across Canada.

The Indigenous Maternity Experiences Project

This month, we are shining a spotlight on our Indigenous Maternity Experiences Survey research.

This month, we are shining a spotlight on our Indigenous Maternity Experiences Survey research. This research is a two-year project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council's (SSHRC) New Frontiers in Research fund, in partnership with Dr. Jennifer Leason at the University of Calgary. The project aims to engage Indigenous people, communities, health care providers, and leadership in a conversation about how we could create an Indigenous Maternity Experiences Survey that is more culturally and contextually relevant.

In 2009, the Public Health Agency of Canada released the Canadian Maternity Experiences Survey. The survey included over 300 questions on topics related to women's perceptions, practices, and experiences before pregnancy; during pregnancy, labour, and birth; and in the early months of parenthood. However, this research excluded First Nations women living on-reserve, incarcerated women, women whose children were not living with them or apprehended at the time of the survey, and many other voices. This research also failed to include Indigenous maternal teachings and unique and complex ways of knowing, or to account for colonialism, racism, and sexism policies and practices, and the social contexts in which Indigenous Peoples live.

This is where our research comes in. To improve maternal health outcomes and create a meaningful survey, our research team decided we need to invite Indigenous life-givers of all genders from across communities and health care professions to help shape our research from the ground up. This year, we held virtual sharing circles with birth and surrogate parents, health care providers, birth partners, family and community members, Elders, and two-spirit, trans, and gender-diverse parents. We spoke with a total of 54 people from many provinces, communities, and territories about their experiences, their strengths, their priorities, and their recommendations for Indigenous maternal health care.

This is the first step in a long conversation about the impacts of ongoing colonization on maternal health, health (in)equity, and the need for cultural safety and resurgence. It will help inform the development of an Indigenous maternity experiences survey.





Through this research, we hope to identify ways to better support and advocate for Indigenous parents, families, and communities throughout their pregnancy and early months of parenting. Our research team will work hard to honour and mobilize the experiences and perspectives shared in this project to make a difference in our communities and our health care systems. We are grounded and driven by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, which emphasize the need to focus efforts on intersecting indicators such as "infant mortality, maternal health, suicide, mental health, addictions, life expectancy, birth rates, infant and child health issues, chronic disease, illness and injury incidence, and the availability of appropriate health services" (TRC 2015:3).

The most interesting part of our work is also the most important: seeing the power of Indigenous-led, community-based research—research that not only mobilizes people's unique experiences to help inform policy, but also brings people together to share information and resources, and find healing, solidarity, friendship, and community.

Social Development

Stories, experiences to help inform how laws can better meet Indigenous women's needs.

This project celebrates the voices and experiences of Indigenous youth of all genders across Turtle Island and Inuit Nunangat who are advocating for gender equality and sexual and gender diversity. A central component of this project involves developing an online networking platform that acts as a virtual space for Indigenous youth to share ideas, build leadership capacity, gain knowledge and skills, and increase their ability to advocate for gender equality and diversity in their communities.



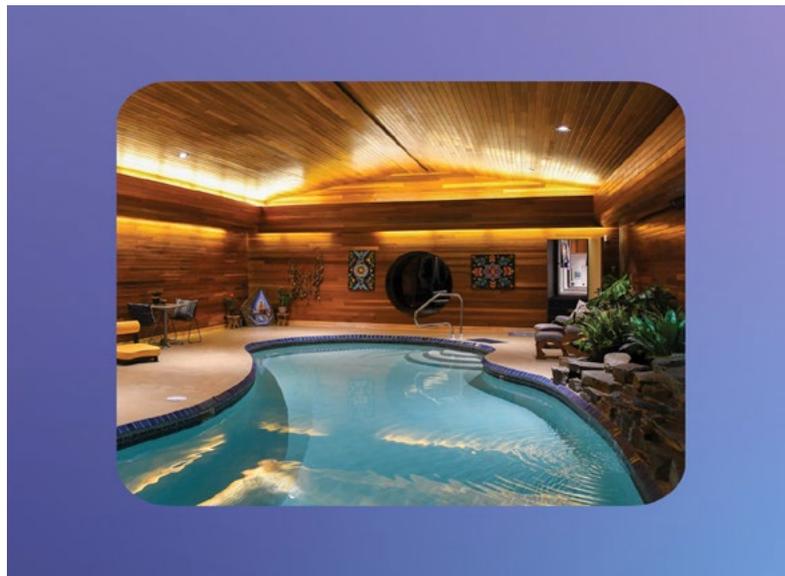
In May, we were happy to receive funding from Indigenous Services Canada through their First Nations and Inuit Youth Employment Strategy. This funding has enabled us to hire a Youth Social Media Coordinator, who will help us develop and implement our social media strategy and will assist us with the creation of skills development workshops for Indigenous youth. These workshops are focused on helping youth 'find their voice,' harness their skills in the digital world, and tap into the online Indigenous youth cultures that are gaining momentum in the era of the pandemic.

July has been a busy month, gearing up for the launch of the website in early August and selecting and meeting with talented youth leaders and entrepreneurs to plan two events in the coming months: one workshop in August on how to utilize social media and digital storytelling to advocate for gender equality, and one interactive panel discussion in September on how to succeed as an Indigenous woman or gender-diverse entrepreneur in the communications sector. We have high hopes for these workshops, as they will inspire a large number of Indigenous youth. At least 50 youth will directly benefit from attending, while thousands more will indirectly benefit by being exposed to the work of Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ workshop leaders with large online followings via our social media outreach. Keep your eye out for event posters!

The Resiliency Lodge: Updates And Growth

As NWAC breaks ground on our second resiliency lodge in New Brunswick, to be opened in spring of 2022, we continue to grow our program. The expansion of our resiliency lodges is one of the centrepieces of our action plan, announced in late May.

To move the expansion plan forward, this month, NWAC discussed with two of our Provincial and Territorial Member Associations (PTMAs) developing resiliency lodges in their provinces. These exciting discussions open up opportunities for more of these crucial healing programs to deliver in-person, Elder-led healing services to Indigenous women and gender-diverse people.



NWAC's Resiliency Lodge in Chelsea, Quebec, also continues to offer robust online programs. In July, we offered 15 workshops with more than 450 participants and we continue to expand our offerings to meet the growing demand. We also continue to offer virtual Elder support services to provide accessible support and guidance to Indigenous women and gender-diverse people.

Every month, we are experiencing significant growth in resiliency lodge programs. As we grow, so does the demand. We look forward to providing more support to Indigenous women and gender-diverse people through the continued development of the resiliency lodge model.

Kci-Niwesq: Making Our Voices Heard

Our voices will only get louder, until justice and fairness is achieved.

In this month's issue, we honoured the life of Chantel Moore and all Indigenous people who lost their lives to police violence. This article, which features testimony from Martha Martin, Chantel Moore's mother and advocate against police violence, outlines a horrific trend of police violence against Indigenous people in Canada. We are standing up against this violence and demanding justice. Indigenous lives matter.

Also in this issue, NWAC President Lorraine Whitman speaks about the inequitable treatment of Indigenous women and girls, and how Indigenous women can unleash their power. In an inspiring piece, Whitman talks about the need for Indigenous women to occupy space in Canadian society and take charge.

Next month's issue will focus on residential schools.

Kci-Niwesq is key in elevating the voices of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people and in inspiring change in our society. NWAC will continue this crucial advocacy work to make sure our voices are heard.

[You can read the full issue and catch up on past issues.](#)

