

# SHINING THE SPOTLIGHT

NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA NEWSLETTER

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## A Message from the CEO

The last couple months were focused on federal politics and the announcement of the 2021 federal election.

### ENGAGING IN ADVOCACY

On August 23, NWAC launched a comprehensive get-out-the-vote campaign aimed at getting Indigenous women and gender-diverse people to the polls. The We're Done Asking, We're Voting campaign included a voter's guide, which outlined where, when, and how to vote; a series of workshops on voting; a priority list; and a scorecard that analyzed the platforms of political parties. All of these resources worked together to encourage Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people to vote and make an informed choice based on their priorities in this election.



This campaign, spanning the latter half of August until election day on September 20, also called for our next government to do better. We were vocal on our expectations for the 44th Canadian Parliament—and we expect to see genuine reconciliation as we move forward with this new government. We spoke in defense of the basic human rights of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people to finally be met by the Canadian government—with clean water in all communities and access to housing, and health care that is free from racism and discrimination.

We will continue to hold the Canadian government accountable and call for immediate action to resolve issues that are most important to Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people.

### BUILDING PTMA CAPACITY

Over the last few months, NWAC continued to engage with our provincial and territorial member associations (PTMAs) on several topics, including reviewing NWAC's bylaws and planning for the developing Resiliency Lodges across the country. Engagement with our PTMAs is central to NWAC's work. It ensures we are always guided by the needs of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people at the grassroots level.

A Message from the CEO (CONT.)

We will continue to engage with PTMAs when developing important programs, like the Resiliency Lodge, to ensure we are guided by grassroots engagement in all of our work.

### DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS

NWAC continues to develop relationships with corporate partners to further support Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people. This month, we engaged with Sephora on a project focused on Indigenous beauty and inclusivity. We also continue to engage with existing partners, including BMO, to develop more programs that provide crucial services to the people we represent.

Both relationships involve projects in the development stage, but we cannot wait to share more with you as we continue to expand our programs and services. The upcoming partnerships we have are exciting, and we are grateful for our partners and the support they are providing us in delivering crucial programs to Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people.

### NWAC TEAM

As NWAC continues to grow, so does our team. Over the last couple months, NWAC was hiring to fill numerous positions across departments to increase our capacity to support Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people. We also continue to support our staff by offering staff on-the-land meetings at the Resiliency Lodge for each department. These on-the-land meetings give staff the opportunity to meet face-to-face and engage with each other.

### IN THIS EDITION...

In this edition of Shining the Spotlight, read more about our election campaign, as well as upcoming projects such as the Sexually Transmitted and Blood Borne Infections (STBBI) Project. Also in this issue is an article from NWAC's legal department on the recently passed Bill C-15, An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We hope you enjoy reading about the work NWAC has done in this month's issue of Shining the Spotlight.

Miigwetch, Thank you, Merci,

*Cynne Groulx*



## Climate Change, Water, and Transportation Focus of Environment Team's Work

**NWAC's environment team has had a busy end to summer and start to fall with initiatives on climate change, water, transportation, and the environment.**



The team recently concluded a major online survey to discover how climate change is affecting Indigenous women in Canada. In total, 724 Indigenous women from across Canada responded. Indigenous women told us they are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change than non-Indigenous people and men, due to their spiritual connection to the land, their responsibilities as household managers and keepers of culture, and poverty and financial challenges. They also told us they're very worried about the various impacts of climate change, especially droughts and wildfires. Despite this worry, most respondents said their communities are not involved in any climate-related activities, and that the biggest need for support is, by far, more education and awareness on how climate change affects their communities. We heard that the most common tools to fight climate change are education and awareness, which needs to happen through different social media channels based on age groups.

NWAC is currently conducting a very interesting project involving an Indigenous Knowledge Framework with Transport Canada. This new framework requires that Indigenous knowledge be considered in project reviews and regulatory decisions touching the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada, the Canada Energy Regulator, the Fish and Fish Habitat Protection Program at Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and Transport Canada. In this context, NWAC will be engaging Indigenous women, Two-Spirited, and gender-diverse people to discuss concrete recommendations for how to put the Indigenous Knowledge Framework into action.



The team is planning a virtual engagement session in October on Travelling Our Waters: Indigenous Women's Voices on the Navigable Waters Act. Following this session, NWAC will develop a report and recommendations for the federal government to ensure that the voices of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people are included in the implementation of the Navigable Waters Act. In 2019, the Canadian Navigable Waters Act was revised to strengthen environmental protection and to make sure Indigenous people are notified and have input on projects that can block their water travel, such as bridges, pipelines, dams, mines, and docks.

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.

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

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## #BeTheDrum: A Calling to Entrepreneurs

**Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people have the right to improve their economic conditions through employment, entrepreneurship, education, and training.**

In the late fall of 2019, NWAC created a program for Indigenous Women Entrepreneurs called #BeTheDrum.

For most Indigenous Peoples, the sound of the drum stirs up a sense of belonging, a feeling of great joy in knowing that we are all connected in a way that gives us hope and keeps us strong. The drum signifies a calling to existing and prospective entrepreneurs to come alive with determination, strengthened through the support of peer mentorship and navigation.

One of the perks of becoming a member of the #BeTheDrum program and directory is that each month #BeTheDrum Navigators select one of our entrepreneurs who has grown with the program to be our entrepreneur of the month. We then create a graphic poster to promote our entrepreneur. They can provide a biography and story about their business and how we have helped them navigate their entrepreneurial journey.

Check out our social media channels to see our past entrepreneurs of the month! Follow us on Instagram and Twitter @bethedrumnwac.

You can sign up for #Bethedrum at: <https://www.nwac.ca/bethedrum/>



## The UNDRIP Act and Action Plan

**On June 21, 2021, Bill C-15 or An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the UNDRIP Act) became law in Canada.**

The UNDRIP Act provides that the Government of Canada must take every measure necessary to ensure that the laws in Canada are consistent with UNDRIP through the preparation and implementation of an action plan.

While NWAC believes that the UNDRIP Act represents an important step toward reconciliation and the recognition of the rights of Indigenous Peoples in Canada, we believe that it is of critical importance that Indigenous women, youth, and gender-diverse people are equally and thoroughly engaged throughout the consultation process for the implementation, and creation, of a UNDRIP action plan.



NWAC will be advocating that the action plan and the legislative amendments to existing domestic law must include a thorough gender-based analysis. We will be calling on the Canadian government to ensure that this action plan sets out measurable goals, feasible time frames, allocated funding, and programming that is specific to Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people.

NWAC is hopeful that in the wake of the federal election, the newly elected government will concretely address how to implement and create an UNDRIP action plan that consults and is inclusive of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people.



## Social Development Work Seeks to Improve the Experiences of Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ and Youth

**Restoring the Circle, is a WAGE-funded project on training public service providers to improve the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ Indigenous survivors of gender-based violence.**

The three-hour self-led online training for service providers is distributed to service providers across the country. Feedback from more than 30 service providers shows a widespread satisfaction and a high degree of uptake.

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.

The G4E project uses online workshops and social media content to celebrate the voices of Indigenous youth of all genders across Turtle Island and Inuit Nunangat who are advocating for gender equality, and sexual and gender diversity.

NWAC applies its culturally relevant gender-based analysis (CRGBA) framework throughout all its policy projects. The goal of this work is to ensure that NWAC's



Social Development Work Seeks to Improve the Experiences of Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+ and Youth (CONT.)

health research and policy analyses are rooted in an intersectional, gender-diverse, Indigenous-focused, trauma-informed, and distinctions-based framework.

NWAC is also working on two initiatives related to Indigenous women with disabilities. The first focuses on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD), and recently featured two virtual engagements with Indigenous women and experts in international law. The outcomes of these sessions will help lay the foundation for a report to the UNCRPD which will supplement Canada's official submission and be a key part of the UNCRPD's monitoring and reporting processes.

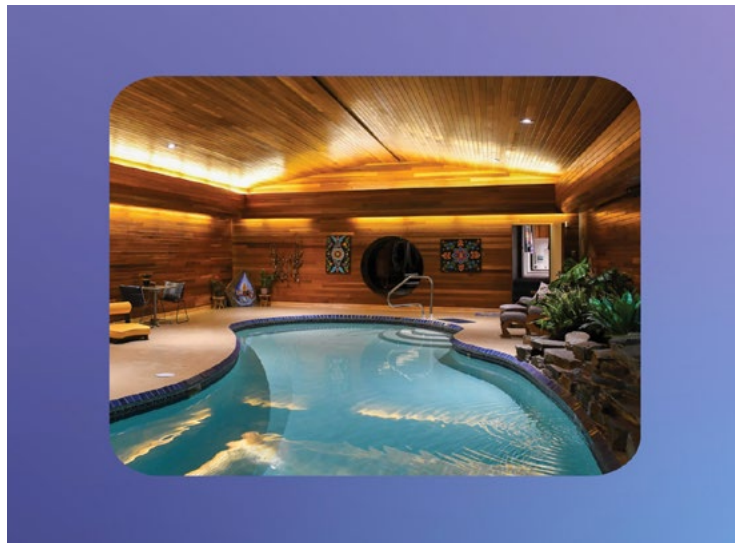
The second initiative, launched in September, is designed to improve the representation of Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people with disabilities among employers subject to Canada's Employment Equity Act. This initiative will involve six virtual engagement sessions in October and November to help develop an employer training program, which NWAC will begin delivering in 2022.



## Resiliency Lodge's Virtual Program: Building Connections from Coast to Coast

**The Resiliency Lodge's online workshops continue to grow, offering Indigenous women from coast to coast the opportunity to connect with one another and learn new skills in an environment that fosters healing.**

A virtual program that was initiated to increase connections during COVID, a time of social disconnection, has flourished into a nation-wide program that is garnering an incredible amount of support.



The Resiliency Lodge offers a wide range of workshops, from artisan skills, to archaeology, to gardening. August workshops featured Beaded Loom Bracelet, Hand Sewing Apron, Métis Flower Embroidery, Planting a Fall Garden, Indigenous Archaeology, Read and Bead, Business and Social Media, as well as Commemoration Orange Faceless Dolls and more.

We continue to see an overwhelming response to every workshop posted, some filling up in under 10 minutes after being advertised. We look forward to expanding this program in the future to meet the demand, as it is clear that our workshops are valued by Indigenous women across the country.

We look forward to seeing this program grow, and we hope to see you in our next workshops!

## Shining a Spotlight on STBBIs

**This month, we are shining a spotlight on NWAC's Sexually Transmitted and Blood-Borne Infections (STBBI) project.**

The FNIHB STBBI project was born out of a need to respond to the fact that while Indigenous women and girls are highly over-represented among HIV cases and other STBBIs, most STBBI services are not designed with Indigenous women in mind. Mainstream services are often highly inaccessible and for individuals with histories of trauma such as sexual abuse, can be re-triggering. Given this knowledge, STBBI interventions for Indigenous women and girls need to be culturally relevant, gender-based, and trauma-informed.

We know that the vulnerability to STBBIs of Indigenous women and girls is intimately linked to a variety of health factors such as poverty, housing insecurity, mental health and addictions, adverse childhood experiences, racism, and unresolved intergenerational trauma as a result of colonialism and the legacy of the residential school system. STBBI interventions will have increased success when health care providers learn to address the possibility of traumas such as sexual abuse or violence, but only after building a trusting relationship.



The STBBI project aims to contribute to a reduction in the disproportionate rates of STBBIs in this population and advocate for the need for STBBI prevention, testing, treatment, and care to be culturally relevant and trauma-informed. The project involved developing culturally safe, gender-based, and trauma-informed STBBI fact sheets, a trauma-informed service provider fact sheet, and an STBBI workshop guide targeted to Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people. The resources that were created throughout this project had a heavy focus on cultural safety and gender inclusivity.

There are so many interesting and rewarding parts of working on the STBBI project. If we had to pick one, it would be that over the last year, we've worked to develop a virtual Culturally Safe and Trauma Informed Knowledge Hub, which houses resources, information, and more relating to sexual and reproductive health.

Education is empowerment, and the Knowledge Hub aims to empower First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women, girls, and gender-diverse people with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions about issues that affect their sexual and reproductive health. An interactive virtual map points people in the direction of culturally safe and anti-oppressive services in their area.



## We're Done Asking, We're Voting

**This August, the country was suddenly plunged into a federal election campaign, and NWAC wanted to make sure the voices of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people were represented at the polls.**

While Indigenous women are the fastest-growing population in Canada, they are greatly under-represented in voter turnout in Canadian elections. Wanting to improve engagement at the polls for Indigenous women in this election, NWAC launched a comprehensive, high-profile Get-Out-the-Vote online campaign with a wealth of information and resources.



Our We're Done Asking, We're Voting campaign included a comprehensive voter's guide on where, when, and how to vote; a workshop series led by NWAC President, Lorraine Whitman, on the importance of voting; an in-depth analysis and scorecard on where each federal party stands on Indigenous women's issues; and a priority list on what NWAC expected to see prioritized in this election cycle.

All of these activities were supplemented by both an earned and paid social media campaign, targeting Indigenous women throughout the country. Our earned media was highlighted by an op-ed published in The Globe and Mail, underlining the importance of the Indigenous vote.

The response we received from this campaign was overwhelming and showed us the importance of making sure the voices of Indigenous women are heard. We are proud of the outcome of this campaign. We helped to reduce barriers to information and provided insight on key issues, so Indigenous women had the resources they needed to exercise their right to vote.

Now that the election is over, NWAC will continue to ensure that the rights of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people are upheld. There were a lot of promises made in this campaign—and we intend to make sure that they are kept.

