

SHINING THE SPOTLIGHT



NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA NEWSLETTER

NEW INITIATIVES • ISSUE 05 • NOVEMBER 2021





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A Message from the CEO

In October, we honoured our Sisters in Spirit and continued to advocate for the rights of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people.

ENGAGING IN ADVOCACY

In October, NWAC hosted our 15th Annual Sisters in Spirit Vigil.—a day to reflect on the violence experienced by Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people. We gathered together virtually to honour our missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people (MMIWG2S).



While we continue to honour MMIWG2S and support those who grieve the loss of loved ones, NWAC also continues our critical work to end this genocide. Our action plan responds to the MMIWG National Inquiry's Calls for Justice; we intend to see it through and help end the genocide. We will continue to call on all governments to do the same.

BUILDING PTMA CAPACITY

In October, NWAC held our Annual General Assembly. Alongside our PTMAs, we discussed the significant work that we have accomplished over the past year, both in advocating for the rights of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people and in providing essential support.

As we spoke about what we have accomplished so far, we also discussed what we need to do next. A key priority is expanding the reach of our in-person and virtual Resiliency Lodge programming by working with PTMAs to expand our outreach. We also spoke about key issues of concern that NWAC must continue to highlight in our work—including housing, food insecurity, and mental health.

I look forward to supporting our PTMAs as our critical work in both advocacy and service delivery continues to grow.

DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS

On October 19, 2021, NWAC and Sephora Canada hosted a National Roundtable on Indigenous Beauty.

A Message from the CEO (CONT.)

The Roundtable engaged in an historic discussion on representations of Indigenous beauty and how Indigenous women and gender-diverse people perceive their own beauty. Over the course of the Roundtable, which was attended by over 200 participants, we heard from Indigenous women and gender-diverse people about how they would like to see themselves represented in mainstream society.

The Roundtable was only the beginning. With our partners, NWAC will continue to ensure representations of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people are inclusive of the diverse experiences, identities, and cultures of Indigenous Peoples.

NWAC TEAM

While we continue to increase our capacity to support Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people by welcoming new team members, we also continue to support our staff by offering on-the-land meetings at the Resiliency Lodge. As we look to the new year, we look forward to offering more space for our staff to gather together at our new Social and Economic Innovation Centre.

IN THIS EDITION...

In this edition of Shining the Spotlight, read more about how we honoured MMIWG2S at our annual Sisters in Spirit Vigil, as well as ongoing work by NWAC's legal department to analyze the impacts of Bill S-3. Also in this issue, hear about NWAC's Circle of Care project, aimed at providing education and support for Indigenous caregivers of people living with dementia..

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

NWAC's Environment team has had a busy start to the fall with initiatives on climate change, water, and transportation. We also welcomed two new team members!



We are currently working with Transport Canada on two projects about the Canadian Navigable Waters Act (CNWA) and Indigenous Knowledge Frameworks (IKF).

In 2019, the CNWA was revised to strengthen environmental protection and to ensure that Indigenous people are notified and have input on projects that can block water travel. However, the 2019 changes did not include any mention of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people, who play significant roles in their communities as water keepers and protectors. To understand the unique knowledge, experiences, and perspectives of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people regarding the CNWA, our team held a virtual engagement session, Travelling Our Waters: Indigenous Women's Voices on the Navigable Waters Act, with 16 Indigenous women and gender-diverse people. We also conducted seven one-on-one interviews in October on the same topic.

These engagement sessions revealed that Indigenous women and gender-diverse people do not have a strong understanding of the CNWA and how it affects their rights to water. The sessions also identified that the decrease of stream flow of waterways due to climate change is infringing on Indigenous rights. A final concern that the participants in the sessions noted is the listing of waterways in the Canadian Navigable Waters Act schedules.

The next step for this project is a National Expert Engagement Symposium, which is scheduled for December 6, 2021. Following the symposium, NWAC will develop a report for Transport Canada that contains recommendations on how the knowledge and perspective of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people can be reflected in the CNWA.

The other project funded by Transport Canada is examining how Indigenous women and gender-diverse people's perspectives and knowledge can be included in Transport Canada's IKF. Under new changes to government legislation, Indigenous knowledge must be considered in project reviews and regulatory decisions made by 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. Our team engaged with Indigenous women, gender-diverse, and Two-Spirit people in three virtual engagement sessions and one-on-one-interviews to discuss concrete recommendations on how the Indigenous Knowledge Framework can be implemented and what factors need to be considered.

The engagement sessions and interviews revealed that any framework must be rooted in Indigenous culture, tradition, and protocol and that any Indigenous knowledge that is shared must be respected by those receiving. Importantly, participants in the engagement sessions and the interviews noted that the protocols to share that knowledge must be based on each individual indigenous community. A final concern that was expressed to our team in these sessions is that traditional Indigenous knowledge should not be shared with the government and not implemented.

The next step of this project is a National Expert Engagement Symposium, which is scheduled for December 13, 2021. Following this symposium, NWAC will produce a report and recommendations for Transport Canada that outlines considerations for implementing the IKF.

As a part of an ongoing project, the Environment Team is continuing to support the four Provincial and Territorial Member Associations (PTMAs) that are conducting an environmental Climate Change Survey project at the regional and grassroots level. In the upcoming months, our team will host three engagement sessions with Indigenous women and write a 20-page research paper on key issues related to climate change, conservation, and biodiversity.

The last project is for the Department of Oceans and Fisheries (DFO) on how provisions included in the Fish and Fish Habitat Program (FFHP) affect Indigenous women and gender-diverse people. In the upcoming months, we will be conducting engagement sessions and will produce a report for the DFO with the findings and recommendations garnered from the sessions. We are also working on some exciting developments for the FFHP online portal, which provides accessible language notice summaries on FFHP provisions and invites feedback from Indigenous women and gender-diverse people. Stay tuned for the FFHP portal updates!



#BeTheDrum: A Calling to Entrepreneurs

If you aren't already familiar with NWAC's Indigenous women's entrepreneur navigation program called #BeTheDrum you can check out [our website](#).

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. It is a safe environment to be able 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 p.m. EST to discuss our goals, accomplishments, ideas, hardships, and victories.

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



Post Bill S-3 Grassroots and Expert Roundtables

NWAC is currently leading a national assessment on whether Bill S-3 effectively eliminated gender-based discrimination from the “Indian status” registration provisions within the Indian Act.

As part of this project, we will be holding up to eight grassroots engagements sessions with Indigenous women and gender-diverse people who have been directly affected by the amendments to the registration provisions. We will also be holding up to six engagement sessions with experts who have a sound understanding of Indigenous gender-based issues when it comes to the status registration provisions.

NWAC also wants to hear from our grassroots and expert participants about Bill S-3. We want to hear about your:

- experiences with applying for registration both before and after the legislation was implemented
- suggestions for what the registration provisions should look like
- advice on who should be included in the consultation processes



NWAC also wants to receive feedback on whether there exists any ongoing discrimination in the legislation, traditional community membership policies and any other valuable commentary.

These engagements will inform our assessment and final report on the effectiveness of Bill S-3 in eliminating sex-based inequities from the registration provisions of the Indian Act. We will advocate that the findings be considered for all future legislative changes to the registration provisions, and we will continue to demand inclusion in all policy discussions that affect Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people.

The time and insights of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people are valuable. For this reason, we will be offering a small honorarium to those who participate in our engagement sessions.



Honouring Our Sisters in Spirit

On October 7, 2021,* the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) held our 15th annual Sisters in Spirit Vigil.

Held virtually and hosted by NWAC President, Lorraine Whitman, our annual vigil honoured the lives of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people (MMIWG2S), provided support to grieving families, and created a space for healing.

During the vigil, we heard from Jeremy Dutcher, a Two-Spirit Indigenous Juno award-winning tenor and activist, who sang a song in honour of MMIWG2S and spoke about the importance of moving forward together. We also heard from a family member of a MMIWG2S, poet Julie Pellissier-Lush, who presented a song in tribute to those who have lost their lives.

We will continue to gather each October in honour of MMIWG2S and to support families who have lost their loved ones to this genocide. We will continue the fight to end this genocide every day.

*The Sisters in Spirit vigil is typically held on October 4 each year, but was delayed to October 7 due to the Facebook outage.



Resiliency Lodge's Engaging in Ceremony

While our virtual programming continues through the Resiliency Lodge—or example, offering 20 workshops with over 800 participants registered this month—we were honoured to host a commemoration ceremony at our Resiliency Lodge in Chelsea, QC, in honour of our Sisters in Spirit.

NWAC's National Elder, Grandmother Roberta Oshkawbewisens, set up a space at the Chelsea Resiliency to pray and hold circles in honour of our missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people (MMIWG2S). Red dresses were hung in memory of MMIWG2S so we always remember them when we gather in this space.



The MMIWG Commemoration Ceremony



Building on the CRGBA Framework; Reducing Employment Barriers

The Social Development Team has had an exciting October building on previous projects, as well as starting some new ones!

Currently, the team is in the process of developing a significant number of new resources and activities around our Culturally Relevant Gender Based Analysis (CRGBA) framework. These new resources and activities will have far-reaching implications, as the CRGBA framework is the foundation of all NWAC's policy projects, external advocacy, and research. For example, our Restoring the Circle project is using a CRGBA framework as a major part of the second phase.

With funding from the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, we created a comprehensive community-based research toolkit that will support NWAC and its partnered organizations in further building their own internal research capacity. It will also allow grassroots voices to take control over their own stories, data, and knowledge sharing. The toolkit is rooted within an intersectional and Indigenous framework and has a variety of CRGBA-informed tools to guide researchers in budgeting, planning, developing appropriate and inclusive survey and interview questions, and determining what methodologies make the most sense for their research projects.



Our team has also begun work on a CRGBA knowledge translation plan to build external awareness of the CRGBA framework and its applications across policy, advocacy, and research. The toolkit is currently in the final design stage and will be disseminated soon.

In addition to our CRGBA framework project, the Social Development Team is working on several projects related to employment. One such project is providing capacity building training for employers, subject to the Employment Equity Act, in their efforts to improve representation of Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people with disabilities in areas of low representation in their workplace. Our team is developing an Employer Training Tool and Best Practices Guide that identifies

and removes barriers to employment for Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people with disabilities. The Employer Training Tool will also include a 10-point Fact Sheet of things the employers should know and will be uploaded to the NWAC website for Canada-wide access. Our team has also consulted with Human Resource Development Canada about a National Outreach Plan to Promote the Disability Act among Indigenous women and gender-diverse people across Canada.

To develop the Employer Training Tool, our team held six engagement sessions with Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people to understand their perspectives, experiences, and knowledge and to listen to their recommendations on how employers can provide a more supportive, accessible, and trauma-informed environment.

For the next phase of this project, the draft Employer Training Program will be used to pilot five employer webinar training sessions. The training sessions will help employers within federally regulated sectors better meet the accessibility mandates, as set out by the Employment Equity Act and, in turn, will reduce employment barriers for Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people with disabilities. The next phase of this project is a social media campaign that will recruit staff of federally regulated employers who wish to participate in the pilot training webinars, which are scheduled for mid-January and February 2022.

Another exciting employment project our team is also working on, with funding from Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), is gathering feedback from Indigenous women on the IT Apprenticeships Program for Indigenous Peoples. This two-year, fully paid apprenticeship program aims to bring Indigenous people into careers in IT—building on their passion and interest, rather than their credentials. NWAC has held four webinars with Indigenous women to learn what they think about how the program is designed. The feedback from these sessions will form the basis of a report and recommendations, which NWAC will deliver to ESDC in December 2021.

Finally, the Social Development Team is continuing our previous work on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Following the success of our September engagement sessions with Indigenous women with disabilities and with experts in international disability law, NWAC is preparing to engage an external consultant to help prepare a shadow report, to be delivered to the United Nations in late 2022. This shadow report will run parallel to Canada's official submission.



Supporting a Circle of Care

This month, we are shining a spotlight on Supporting a Circle of Care: A Culturally Informed Support Group and Toolkit for Indigenous Caregivers of People Living with Dementia.

Funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada's Dementia Community Investment Fund, Circle of Care is a project within NWAC's Dementia program area.

The project was created to provide education and support for Indigenous caregivers of people living with dementia. The incidence of dementia has increased dramatically in Indigenous communities over the last decade. In these communities, dementia care is commonly provided within the person's own home, with caregiving typically provided by a family member. Despite being a very rewarding experience, caregiving comes with its own set of challenges.



The Circle of Care project focuses on the caregiver. It aims to provide support and information to caregivers who need to continue taking care of their loved one while prioritizing their own needs and well-being. The Circle of Care Toolkit helps caregivers plan ahead, record important information, and document aspects of their journey with their loved one. It also provides tips and tricks on self-care, understanding their loved one's needs, and developing a support network.

While providing care for a loved one can be rewarding and offer an opportunity to become closer, it can be demanding on the caregiver's mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being. Caregivers frequently report having sleep issues, anxiety, depression, burnout, feelings of frustration, financial challenges, and feeling socially isolated.

Indigenous caregivers may lack essential information and knowledge on dementia. They may not know how to access culturally safe supports and services to help them provide care and also cope with the stresses of caregiving.



Through the toolkit and support groups, the Circle of Care project aims to improve the knowledge and experience of the caregiver and in turn, improve the care provided to the person living with dementia and their experience.

The engagement portion of the Circle of Care is central to the project and ensures the inclusion of Indigenous values, beliefs, and traditions. The peer support group sessions have allowed caregivers to learn about dementia and discuss problems of caregiving. Participants receive traditional information and perspectives on dementia and caregiving and have an opportunity to talk with other Indigenous caregivers who may be having similar experiences.

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