



Native Women's  
Association of Canada



L'Association des  
femmes autochtones  
du Canada

# Special Report

## NWAC Operations

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June 2018

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## Executive Summary

This report presents a historical overview of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), which predominately identifies systemic operational funding issues within the federal government's approach to nonprofits that causes an over reliance on project funding. NWAC specifically yields significant operational challenges due to its excessive dependence on unstable project funding. Budgeting and financial management are extremely difficult to maintain with the fluctuating revenue precipitating unexpected deficits, most notably from the years 2011 to 2016. Furthermore, in those five years, NWAC suffered dramatic decreases in government funding causing additional financial strain.

NWAC has experienced severe operational difficulties since it opened in 1974 – largely due to the erratic project funding – including operational instability, and chronic problems in human resources and reporting. This forces NWAC to rely on short-term contract staff or high-priced consultants creating massive staff fluctuations, further contributing to the organization's instability and to employees' lack of job security.

Since November 2016, with the successful securement of a new Executive Director, Lynne Groulx LL.L., J.D., NWAC embarked on a new direction implementing operational measures, diversifying funding, and seeking revenues outside of government sources.

Moving forward with the new direction, NWAC is in the process of taking the practical and concrete steps towards achieving financial stability, long-term sustainability, and self-sufficiency to alleviate the strains caused by unreliable funding. Through the purchase of a permanent office building, NWAC will reduce its operational costs and provide opportunities for new revenue generating activities identified by the Board of Directors. The new building has established equity while continuing to make NWAC an employer of choice.

In order to meet the rapidly growing capacity needs of the organization, NWAC developed a Human Resources department creating a framework, which encompasses the policies, the procedures and the supports for all staff members. NWAC values its staff and works to remain an enticing employer. In doing so, NWAC has secured an in-house Elder, available to the staff as needed, incorporated Indigenous culture throughout the flex-workspace and maintained an environmentally friendly office. The new building will enhance these elements through its design and structure, completely dedicated to NWAC's priorities, to Indigenous women, to its employees, and to Canada as a whole.

Even under the most strenuous circumstances, NWAC achieved significant milestones in the past year and a half. However, this type of institutionalized instability must end. NWAC needs stable core funding and support for its social and cultural innovation projects to enhance the lives of women of many nations.



# Historical Overview: NWAC Operations

## Organizational Overview

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is a National Indigenous Organization representing the political voice of Indigenous women, girls, and gender diverse people in Canada, inclusive of First Nations on and off reserve, status and non-status, disenfranchised, Métis, and Inuit. An aggregate of twelve Indigenous women's organizations, NWAC was founded on the collective goal to enhance, promote, and foster the social, economic, cultural and political well-being of Indigenous women within their respective communities and Canadian societies.

Celebrating 45 years in 2018, NWAC has established strong and lasting governance structures, decision-making processes, financial policies and procedures, and networks to help achieve its overall mission and goals. Today, NWAC engages in national and international advocacy aimed at legislative and policy reforms that promote equality for Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse people, including LGBTQ2S+ people. Through advocacy, policy, and legislative analysis, we work to preserve Indigenous culture and advance the well-being of all Indigenous women, girls, and gender diverse people, as well as their families and communities.

NWAC strives to encompass the needs and services grassroots Indigenous women identify including, but not limited to, employment, labour and business, health, housing, violence prevention and safety, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, youth and Elder supports, justice and human rights, environment, early learning childcare, and international affairs.

Since 1974, NWAC has operated under an unstable and insufficient funding system, consisting of a small portion of core funding and a majority portion of project funding. This chronic underfunding negatively affects non-profits and Indigenous organizations across Canada.<sup>1</sup> As a nonprofit, NWAC is deeply affected by these factors, classifying these systemic issues as extremely serious. On a daily basis, the demand for Indigenous culturally relevant and gender-specific services are rapidly on the rise.<sup>2</sup>

For years, NWAC has received insufficient core funding and has been disproportionately reliant on sporadic project funding, predominately from Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) and Crown-Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNA) projects. This piece-meal approach has presented serious operational challenges.

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<sup>1</sup> Katherine Scott et al., "Regional Highlights of the National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations," *The Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector in Ontario*, 2006, , 2006, accessed June 1, 2018, [http://www.imaginecanada.ca/sites/default/files/www/en/nsnvo/d\\_ontario\\_sector\\_report.pdf](http://www.imaginecanada.ca/sites/default/files/www/en/nsnvo/d_ontario_sector_report.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



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## Financial History

Since 2011, NWAC received over 90% of its revenues from the following seven organizations:

- Employment and Social Development Canada (45.4%)
- Crown-Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (26.0%)
- Status of Women Canada (9.6%)
- Health Canada (5.3%)
- Public Health Agency of Canada (3.4%)
- Environment and Climate Change Canada (1.9%)
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research (1.3%)

NWAC's operations have consistently been reliant of ESDC and CIRNA, with 75% of NWAC's funding in 2016 coming from the two departments. Further, NWAC's funding has been largely project based with funds allocated inconsistently throughout the year, creating operational instability, and chronic challenges in financing, human resources, and reporting.

Certain core operational costs are not eligible under government project funding, leaving no room for unexpected operational expenses, and little to no capacity for operational support staff. The unpredictable nature of project funding leaves the organization reliant on short-term contract staff or high-priced consultants, creating chronic human resources instability.

In addition, for the past several years, NWAC's revenues have been steadily declining. Overall, in 2016, revenues were down since 2011 by \$582,000. Table 1 shows the significant funding reductions since 2011 from the following departments:

- Over half of Status of Women Canada in 2015 (decreased by \$355,000)
- All of Health Canada ceased in 2013 (decreased by \$680,000)
- All of Public Health Agency of Canada ceased in 2015 (decreased by \$109,000)
- The majority of Environment and Climate Change Canada in 2015 (decreased by \$106,000)





Between 2010 and 2015, the organization lost \$594,000 of its accumulated surpluses. Such reduction threatened the working capital necessary to operate a national association of NWAC's magnitude.

**Table 1: Funding Reductions**

	2009	2010	2011	2012
<b>Total Revenue</b>	\$6,154,839	\$6,475,526	\$5,233,812	\$5,538,262
<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$6,070,940	\$5,878,242	\$5,465,161	\$5,667,466
<b>Excess (Deficiency) of Revenues Over Expenses</b>	\$83,899	\$597,284	(\$231,349)	(\$129,204)
	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Total Revenue</b>	\$4,984,834	\$4,612,109	\$4,203,260	\$4,651,630
<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$5,080,967	\$4,712,027	\$4,241,051	\$4,621,549
<b>Excess (Deficiency) of Revenues Over Expenses</b>	(\$96,133)	(\$99,918)	(\$37,791)	\$30,081

## Operational challenges

Relying on project funding for many successive years yields significant challenges in budgeting and financial management, leaving the organization at serious risk of unexpected deficits. Finance staff have been required to work from multiple budgets, creating difficulties consolidating the organization's finances.

These projects create different reporting requirements specific to each funder, overburdening NWAC staff with extensive reporting. NWAC staff must frequently manage unforeseen expenses due to a lack of financial and operational capacity, causing years of systemic issues.

- In 2014, the organization incurred late penalties from the CRA, indicating the need for a payroll system review.
- In 2013, legal fees were \$58,000 higher than the prior year due to matters involving former staff.



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- In the 2011 Auditor's report it noted the lack of on-going budgeting, stating that this put the organization at risk of unexpected surpluses and deficits.
- In 2010, it similarly cited the lack of reporting, lack of consistent bank reconciliations, as well as late CRA payments for payroll.

These operational problems have significantly strained the organization's already limited revenues. In addition to these financial challenges, costs such as high rent take up a large percentage of the organization's limited operating budget. In 2015, rent was \$73,000 more than funding supported as the organization remained locked into its lease.

Human resources instability has been a recurring challenge to NWAC's operations. These staffing challenges have included the position of the Executive Director. In early 2016, the previous Executive Director retired. For seven months, the organization struggled to fill the position. In April of 2016, a new Executive Director started only to resign days later, after which the organization operated with an NWAC project manager; acting as Executive Director; until NWAC could staff the position in November 2016.

Staffing fluctuated greatly over the past several years. At the end of October 2016, the organization consisted of 16 staff members (3 finance staff, 10 project staff, 2 part-time students, and 1 administrative assistant).

## A New Approach

### Funding Initiatives

At the beginning of November 2016, with the support of the Board of Directors and the new Executive Director, Lynne Groulx, LL.L., J.D., the organization reset its financial administration by implementing modernized approaches, diversifying funding, and seeking revenues outside of government sources.

Additionally, NWAC employed a full-time proposal writer to concentrate on re-staffing and funding for the organization. NWAC has achieved massive success with this strategy bringing back departments and expanding NWAC's activities and deliverables.



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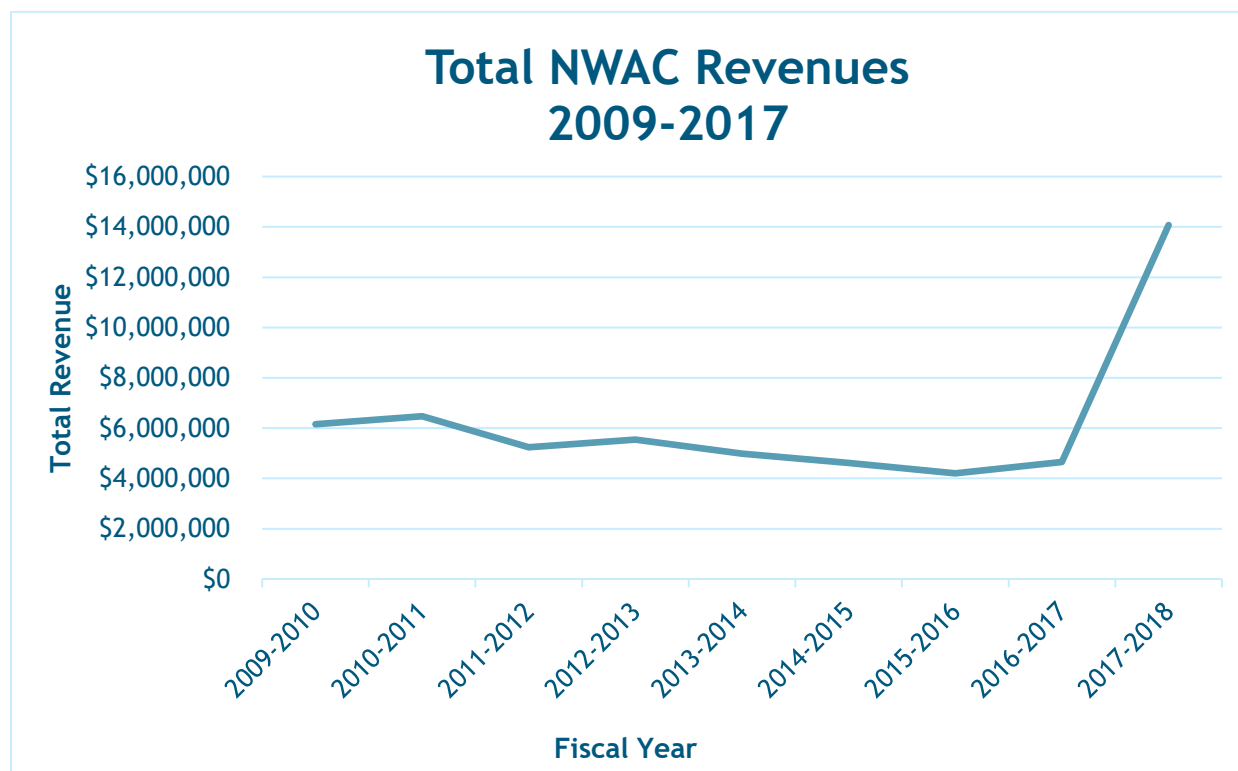
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In the 2017-2018 fiscal year, NWAC diversified its funding sources increasing total revenues to \$14,072,244.23, receiving funding from the following federal departments:

- Environment and Climate Change Canada
- First Nations & Inuit Health
- Heritage Canada
- Employment and Social Development Canada
- Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada
- Indigenous Services
- Statistics Canada
- Status of Women Canada
- Public Health Agency of Canada
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research
- Chief Electoral Officer
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- Public Safety Canada
- Correctional Services Canada

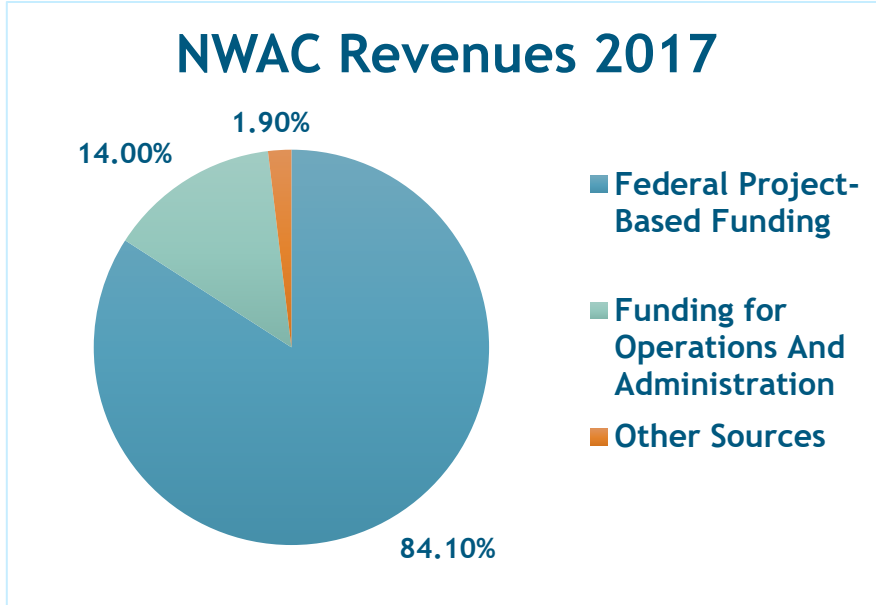
**Graph 1: Total NWAC Revenues 2009-2017**







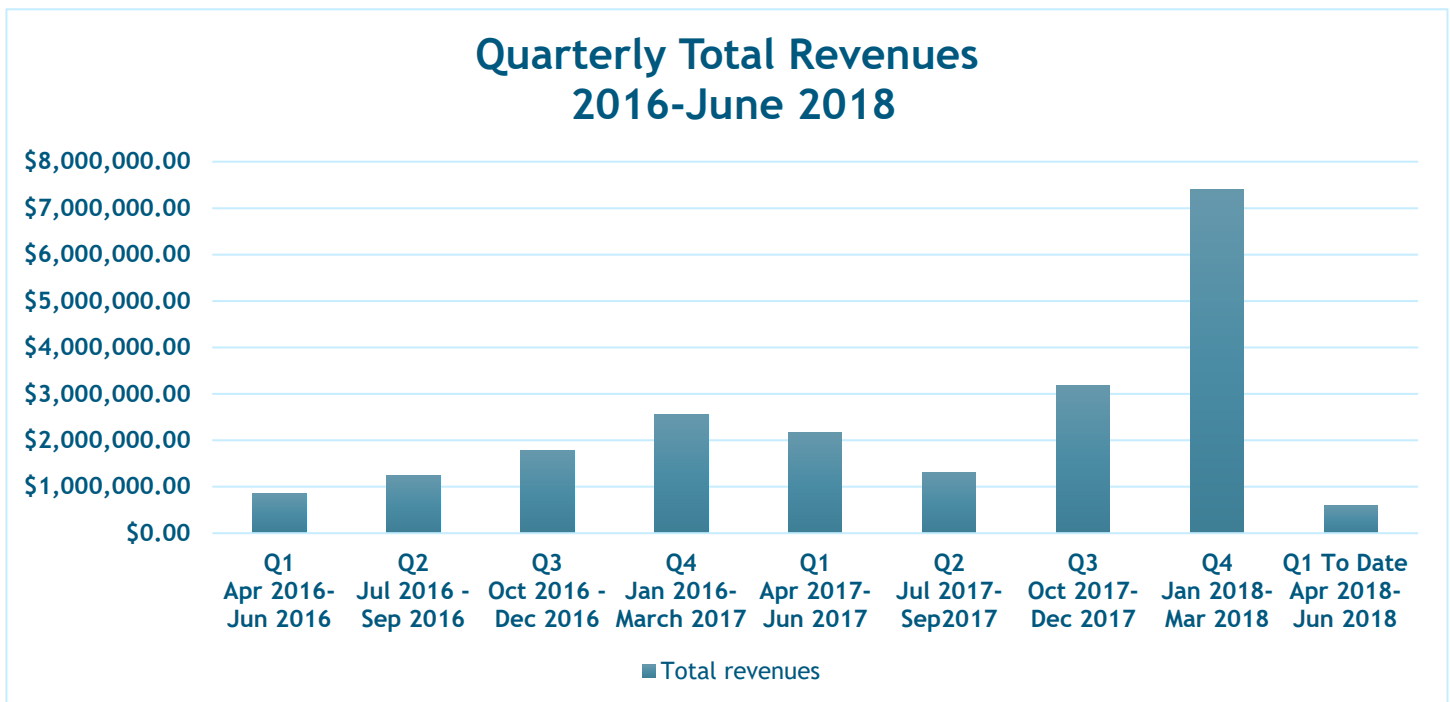
Graph 2: NWAC Revenues 2017



Despite diversifying funding sources, 84% of NWAC's total revenue was still federal government project funding. This form of funding is approved sporadically throughout the year, often a few months before the end of fiscal year.

Spikes in revenues toward the third and fourth quarters are caused by project approvals in the third and fourth quarter creating operational pressure points.

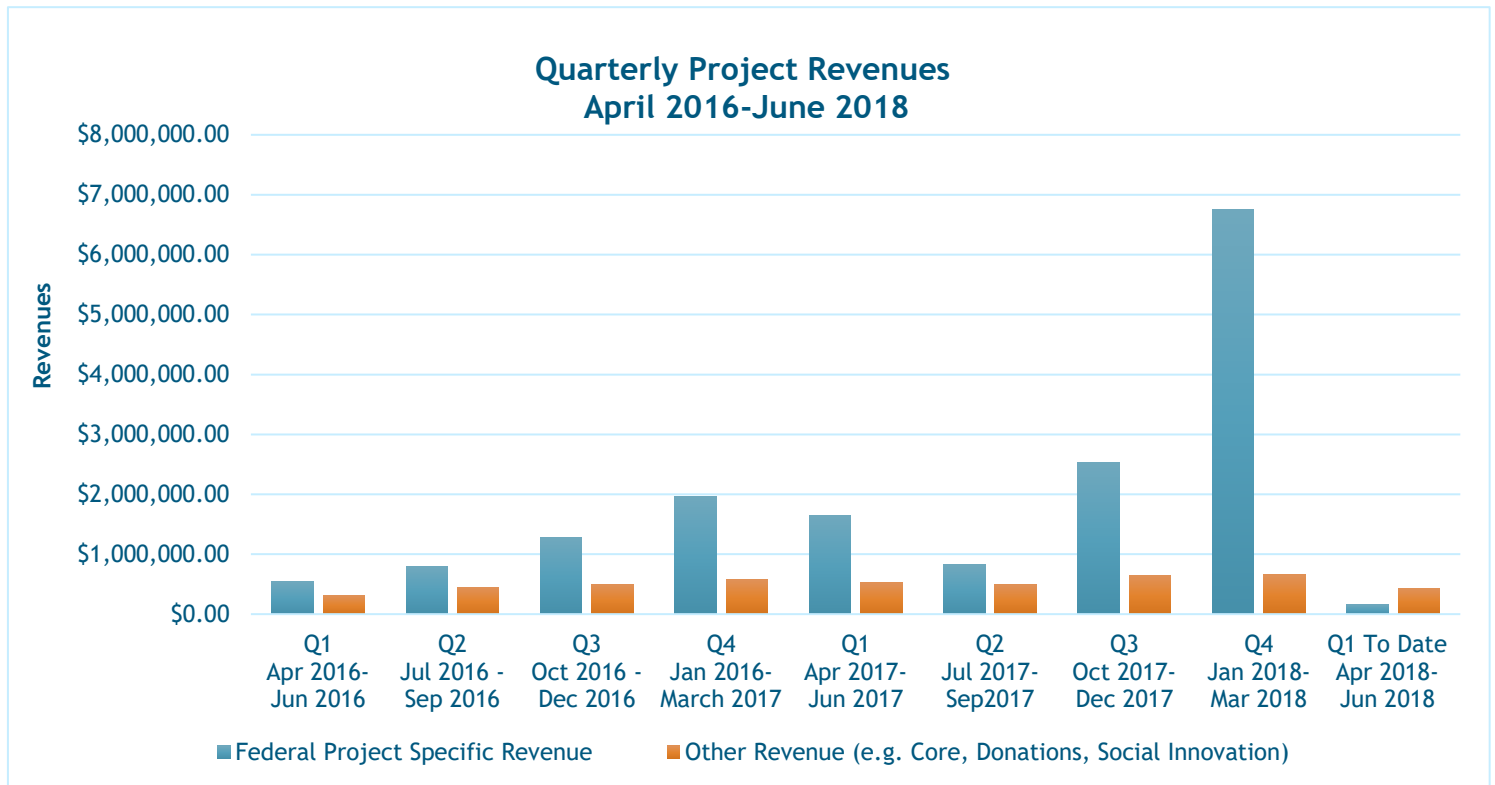
Graph 3: Quarterly Total Revenues 2016 - June 2018





For a significant number of projects, NWAC had only a few months to complete a year's worth of activities and deliverables causing an influx and exit of programs and employees once the projects are finished.

**Graph 4: Quarterly Project Revenues April 2016-June 2018**



The inflow of project approval necessitates rapid hiring of project staff increased pressure on finance, human resources, and the general operations.

It is important to note that as of April 1, 2018 NWAC's funding levels fall back to \$1 million in core funding and approximately \$4 million in project funding. The organization must once again aggressively seek project funding in order to keep its essential workforce at a minimum of 50 staff positions.

### Implementing Operational Measures

By recognizing the need for operational measures to stabilize the organization, NWAC's Executive Director requested additional recommendations to be included in the most recent Auditor's report, issued in April of 2017.



NWAC's auditor provided a historical overview and advice on budgeting and funding, surpluses and deficits, and fiscal management of projects.

The report recommended that NWAC:

- Centralize management of finances
- Diversify funding sources; and
- Seek financing that is more autonomous where possible

As part of the organization's commitment to capacity building and improving internal policies and controls, NWAC's Executive Management implemented these recommendations.

In addition, NWAC implemented an updated, automated payroll system, secured an on-staff Comptroller/Chartered Accountant and conducted a preliminary review of its finance manual.

NWAC expanded its operational capacity by enhancing the Finance, Business, Employment and Social Development, International Affairs, and Health departments with key staff positions, and by creating Special Projects and Events, Legal, Human Resources, Communications, Youth Advocacy, Strategic Policy and Corporate departments with key staff positions.

The Board of Directors, the Executive Council, Standing Committees and Executive Director have met extensively over the past year and a half. Input from these governance structures are critical to NWAC's growth and success.

The Executive Council, Standing Committees and Ad Hoc Committees developed a renewed Terms of Reference, approved policies, set out a new Strategic plan as well as a review of current by-laws. NWAC Governance was further strengthened with the addition of in-house legal counsel.

## Human Resources and Employment

Internal staff capacity has steadily increased since the end of 2016, with the organization growing from 16 staff to 52 staff in June 2018.

The fluctuation of funding continues to present human resources challenges. The inflow of project approvals requires rapid hiring of project staff increasing the pressure on finance, human resources, and the general operations. Last minute approval of projects combined with short timelines and insufficient capacity funding has necessitated hiring "*temp agency staff*".



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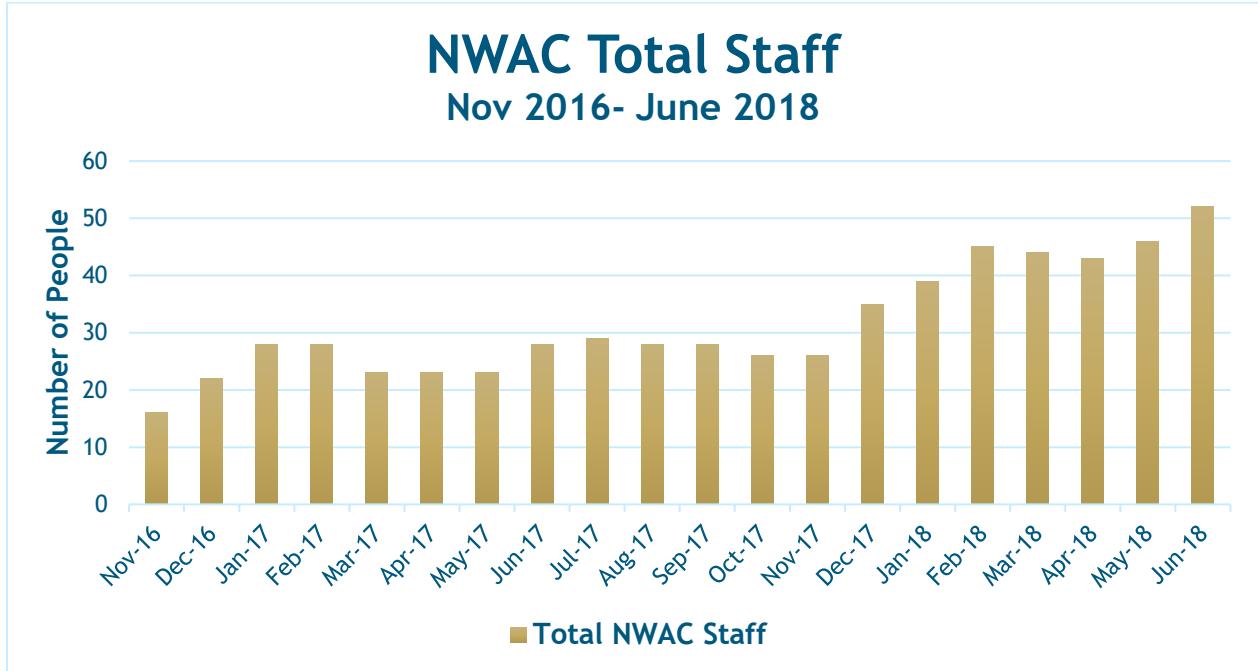
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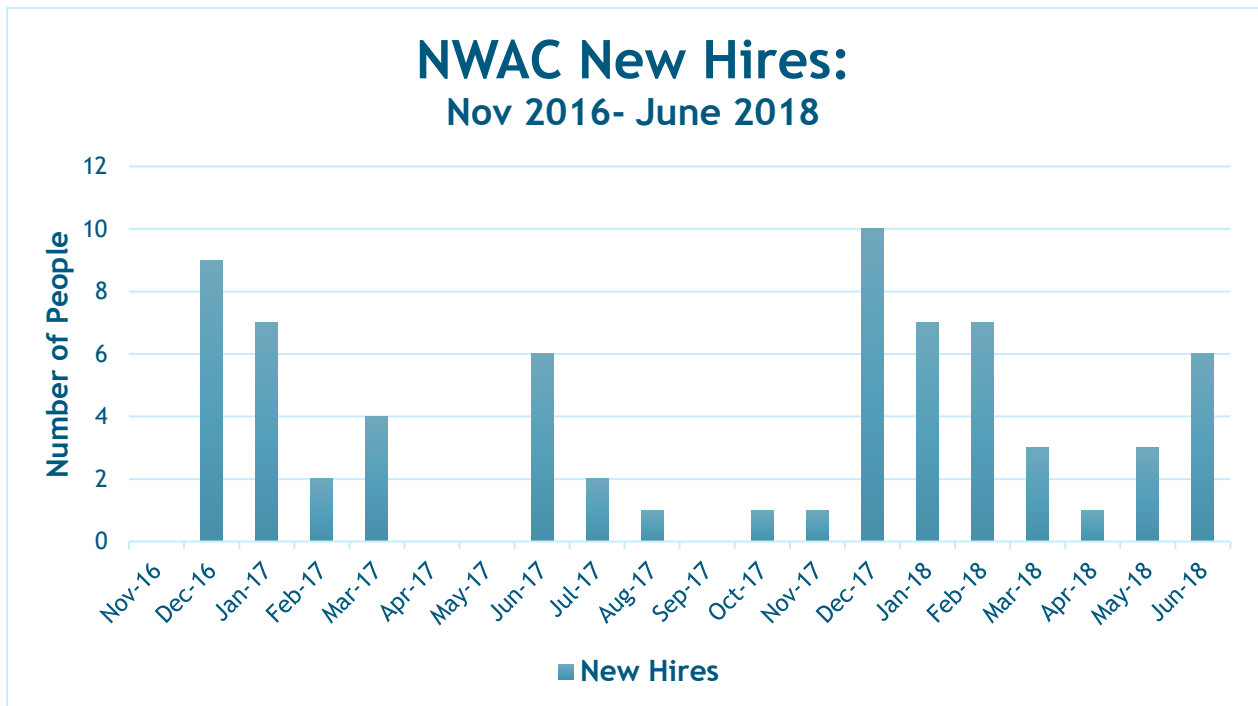
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**Graph 5: NWAC Total Staff Nov 2016- June 2018**



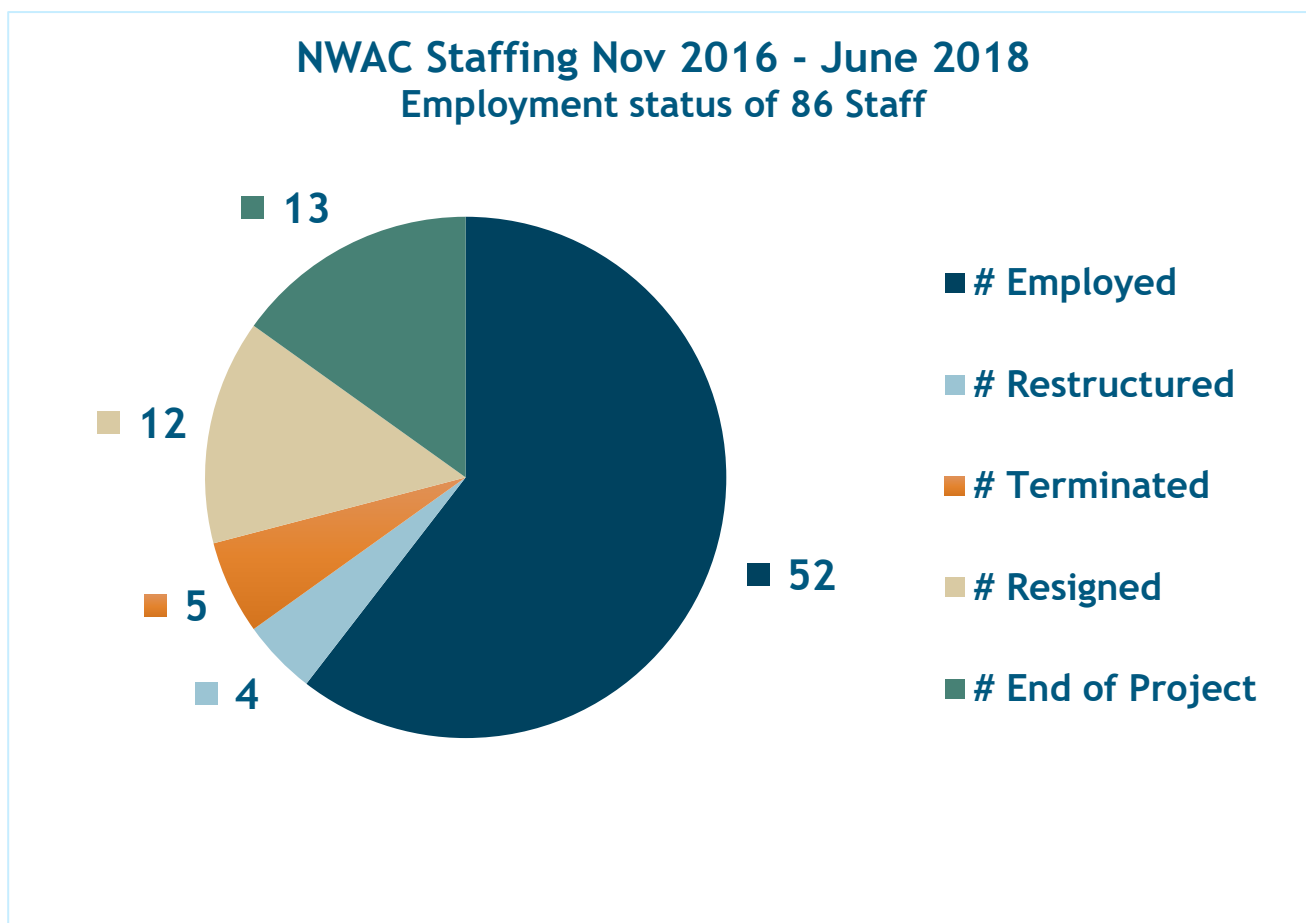
**Graph 6: NWAC New Hires Nov 2016-June 2018**





As the majority of funding is project based, the organization is not able to retain some staff upon the completion of projects. While NWAC attempts to bridge staff into new projects or operational positions whenever possible, this is not always feasible.

**Graph 7: NWAC Staffing Nov 2016 – June 2018 Employment status of 86 Staff**



There is a total of 86 fulltime and contract staff, with 15 *temp agency* staff, for a total of 101 staff who have been employed by NWAC from November 2016 - June 2018. Staff departures are predominantly due to the end of projects (13), and resignations (12). Fifteen staff brought in for short-term projects were successfully bridged into successive projects or transitioned to permanent operational staff steadily growing NWAC's work force. This includes internal promotions to management positions.

- Four positions were eliminated through restructuring. Of these positions, one was a part-time student position replaced with a full-time staff member, and three were restructured to address inefficiencies and redundancies in the operations.





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- The twelve resignations were due to personal reasons including, but not limited to, health, other career opportunities or family obligations.
- While some terminations were due to job performance, others were terminated following claims of harassment against other NWAC staff. NWAC does not tolerate lateral violence or harassment, and takes steps to protect its staff in accordance with employment law.

NWAC is in the process of addressing ongoing human resource issues, including challenges attracting and retaining Indigenous staff. Common reasons for difficulties attracting and retaining Indigenous employees include limited career advancement, hiring of Indigenous workers by government and other companies, reluctance to move away from community, and inadequate compensation.<sup>3</sup> NWAC itself has experienced these challenges, which are exacerbated by inadequate and unpredictable funding. NWAC cannot guarantee employment past the end of a project and is not funded sufficiently to offer competitive salaries. Employment uncertainty impacts staff mental health and well-being, as many are only certain of employment for a few months at a time.

## Significant Milestones

While addressing these challenges, NWAC achieved significant milestones over the past year and a half paying special attention to human resources development.

- Balanced NWAC budgets after chronic deficits
- Rebranding NWAC
- Established an Environmentally friendly workplace
- Created a Human Resources Framework
- Created a Human Resources Department with a Human Resources Specialist
- Created a Communications Department with active social media presence
- Hired a Legal Counsel team
- Increased internal capacity to respond to government requests to inform policy with culturally appropriate and gender-specific analysis
- Held teambuilding gatherings
- Began revisions of the Human Resources Manual
  - Including a Telework Policy and Indigenous Preference Policy
- Implemented regular meetings with the Board of Directors and standing committees
- Purchased updated equipment for staff
- Promoted Indigenous culture and teachings in the workplace
- Began a monthly internal newsletter
- Provided opportunities for professional development and other skill building
- Hosted French language training for 20 staff

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<sup>3</sup> Alison Howard, Jessica Edge, and Douglas Watt, "Understanding the Value, Challenges, and Opportunities of Engaging Métis, Inuit, and First Nations Workers," *The Conference Board of Canada* 1, no. 1 (July 2012): , accessed June 1, 2018, <http://www.otec.org/Files/pdf/Understanding-The-Value-of-Hiring-Aboriginal-Worke.aspx>.



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- Created new key positions
  - Director of Operations
  - Proposal Writers
  - In-house Elder
- Purchased new office building establishing equity
- Increased the focus on youth advocacy
- Standardized administrative reporting activities
- Formalized hiring practices focused on ensuring representation of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, and promoting diversity when hiring non-Indigenous groups

## Moving Forward

### Purchase of a Building and Revenue Producing Activities

NWAC has taken the practical and concrete steps towards achieving financial stability, long-term sustainability, and self-sufficiency through the purchase of a permanent location at 120 Promenade du Portage, in Gatineau, Québec.

This permanent location will yield significant savings compared to current expenditures on office rent, will accommodate NWAC's expanding workforce, and will host new revenue generating activities as recommended.

The building has a commercial tenant, whose rent covers a significant portion of the building's costs. Additional revenue producing activities include:

#### ***TRAINING AND WORKSHOPS***

The largest of NWAC's revenue producing initiatives is the workshop and training spaces, where NWAC will offer culturally relevant gender-based training and workshops to private, public and government sector stakeholders. These workshop spaces will also be available for rent for gatherings and meetings. These in-house workshops and training rooms are a first step towards NWAC self-sufficiency and financial stability, while building capacity for culturally relevant gender-based training and education to external organizations.

#### ***NWAC STORE***

The NWAC store, a boutique specializing in art, gifts, and accessories from both emerging and established Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and non-binary designers will feature products from local, national and international artisans.



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## *NWAC CAFÉ*

The NWAC Café will offer a unique modern menu designed by Indigenous chefs. The Café itself will incorporate Indigenous design elements, environmentally friendly construction materials, and a focus on energy efficiency. An ad hoc advisory committee consisting of Indigenous knowledge keepers and Elders is advising the architects and interior designers to ensure an infusion of Indigenous culture and teachings throughout the space. NWAC is working with an Elder, an Indigenous chef, and an Indigenous graphic design and branding firm to develop the Café concept and branding.

## Financial and Operational Stability

NWAC has taken steps to pursue stabilized, increased core funding and longer-term projects, thereby offering a more secure workplace for the employees. These steps will benefit Indigenous women, girls, and gender diverse people through consistent access to services and supports, and advocacy.

A task management system is in development, designed to monitor project budgets, progress, and deliverables. This control system will accompany a more stringent financial forecasting and monitoring of project budgets. Finance staff will receive specialized training on non-profit accounting, and the comptroller will use Intelligence Reports to analyze the organization's financial data.

NWAC continues to seek funding from non-government sources, including development and application of a fundraising strategy. NWAC's revenue producing activities will further contribute to financial stability, with all revenues supporting NWAC's operations, advocacy, and programs.

## Human Resources and Employment

NWAC offers professional development at an individual and group level to all staff, while continuing efforts to provide mentoring opportunities and internal promotions to staff members. Capacity building for the Finance, Human Resources, and Communications Department will continue, expanding to meet the increasing demands created by NWAC's extensive projects and policy work. NWAC implements regular cultural activities for staff, will implement trauma informed standards, and appoint a mental health champion. NWAC continues to offer a flexible work environment, prioritizing accessibility, and ensuring accommodations are available when needed. Policies are reviewed regularly and kept up-to date, and the Board of Directors and standing committees meet regularly.



# Success Stories: NWAC Projects November 2016- June 2018

## Business, Employment and Social Development

### *AWBEN 2017 AND 2018*

Since 2016, NWAC hosted two [Aboriginal Women Business and Entrepreneurship Network](#) (AWBEN) projects. Now in its sixth year of operating, AWBEN continues to engage Indigenous women and support new and existing entrepreneurs from across the country. The AWBEN Conference is the signature event of the AWBEN project and the 2018 year marked the fifth annual event held in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

AWBEN brings Indigenous women from across Canada together to support and learn from one another over the course of a few days. Topics discussed at the 2018 conference included social media, funding, creating and launching a business pitch.

The AWBEN website offers tools and resources for Indigenous women entrepreneurs for ongoing support towards forging long-term mentoring and networking relationships across the country.

### *INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN BUSINESS: FOCUS GROUP*

The Native Women's Association of Canada, in partnership with First People's Group, conducted a focus group with 20 Indigenous women who are at different stages of business ownership. Participants from Winnipeg, Ottawa and Montreal were recruited for a half-day discussion about best practices, barriers to small business development and gaps in available supports and services for Indigenous women in business.

The bulk of the discussion focused on successes and challenges that each of the women had experienced while planning, launching and owning their own businesses. Each participant could list several elements of their experience that they were proud of or that they defined as successful. It was clear that entrepreneurship transforms the lives of Indigenous women by increasing financial stability and socio-economic status. That upward mobility ripples out to affect the quality of life of their communities as well.

### *BUSINESS ENTREPRENEURSHIP SKILLS TRAINING (BEST)*

The Aboriginal BEST program is a free training program designed to support Indigenous entrepreneurship. This includes training on making a business plan, marketing, financing, and operations.



Twenty Indigenous women have been trained to deliver the Canadian Centre for Aboriginal Entrepreneurship (CCAIE) Aboriginal Business & Entrepreneurship Skills Training program (Aboriginal BEST) to other Indigenous women in their regions.

In partnership with CCAIE, NWAC delivers a culturally relevant, gender-based skills development and training program to underemployed and unemployed Indigenous women across Canada.

### ***ABORIGINAL SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT TRAINING STRATEGY (ASETS)***

The [Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy](#) (ASETS) is an integrated approach to Aboriginal labour market programming. ASETS links training to labour market demand and ensures that Canada's Indigenous people can participate in economic and education opportunities.

NWAC is the only gender –specific National Indigenous Organization ASETS holder.

NWAC is committed to enhancing and strengthening the economic reality for Indigenous women, their families and communities across Canada. ASETS is delivered through NWAC's Provincial and Territorial Membership Associations (PTMAs) across the country. This gender-specific funding is delivered in 10 Provinces and 2 Territories.

### ***WOMEN BUILDING FUTURES (WBF)***

NWAC participated in a Pilot Project with Women Building Futures (WBF) that addressed five recurring barriers affecting Indigenous women's access to training and employment.

This Pilot Project comprises of five components that will complement programs already established by WBF:

- Childcare program
- Driver's license program
- National advertising campaign
- Individual Learning Plan (ILP) development
- Foundational Learning Course development

The goal is to bridge gaps in training and experience to allow Indigenous women to access employment in the trades while also focusing on building confidence, life skills, workplace culture preparedness, and providing personal support to allow participants to thrive.





## Financial Health and Wealth

The 2018 [Financial Health and Wealth](#) training program is the third installment of NWAC's goal to provide Indigenous women with financial training. This project focused on the development of training materials and course sessions to benefit financial health and independence of Indigenous women.

Additionally, NWAC developed Financial Health and Wealth toolkits for women who participated. The toolkit includes a carrying bag with branding, an accordion folder for document organization, a piggy bank, a pen and notebook set.

NWAC currently has a waiting list of future participants for Financial Health and Wealth training.

## Health

### *PEKE*

The [Partner for Engagement and Knowledge Exchange](#) (PEKE) works to improve the health and well-being of Indigenous women, families, and communities through health research, knowledge exchange and action.

PEKE works to help facilitate a receptive environment for learning and collaboration across research teams and Indigenous communities. This program supports the translation of research findings into policies and scaled-up interventions.

Through engaging with Indigenous people, communities and organizations PEKE incorporates Indigenous voices, ways of knowing, and culture into the research. This supports increased participation of Indigenous women and applies a cultural framing that reflects their histories, current realities and circumstances.

### ***WALKING THE RED PATH: RE-FORGING CONNECTIONS, EMPOWERING INDIGENOUS WOMEN TO HEAL, AND DRIVING CHANGE FOR A HEALTHY FUTURE***

RED Path is a five-year project funded through the Public Health Agency of Canada's HIV and Hepatitis C (HCV) Community Action Fund. The project aims to develop a sustainable, evidence-based, and culturally relevant HIV and HCV intervention for Indigenous women in four federal correctional institutions.

Evidence is gathered through an environmental scan consisting of a literature review, resources scan, and learning circles with Indigenous women from Fraser Valley Institution for Women,



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Edmonton Institute for Women, Buffalo Sage Wellness House and the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge for Aboriginal Women.

Overall, the project aims to strengthen capacity, identify and reduce barriers to health and social services, prevention, diagnosis and treatment for HIV, HCV, and other related sexually transmitted and blood borne infections (STBBIs), and increase uptake of prevention and harm reduction measures.

## Violence Prevention and Safety

### *YOU ARE NOT ALONE (YANA)*

The *You Are Not Alone* Toolkit was developed by NWAC to support Indigenous women, girls, and gender diverse people to live free from violence. The Toolkit has four workshops with a variety of activities under each workshop theme. The workshops are: (1) What is Domestic Violence? (2) Are You in an Abusive Relationship? (3) Planning to Leave (4) After you Leave.

In this Train the Trainer program, NWAC gathered participants from a diverse group of agencies from across Canada representative of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people as well as the voices of rural and urban agencies. All these organizations provide services to Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse people.

### *HONOURING INDIGENOUS WOMEN PROJECT*

The Honouring Indigenous Women, Girls, and Gender Diverse People project was created to acknowledge the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People (MMIWGGD).

The Honouring project consisted of creating a book, available online, that would fit the curriculum of schools Canada wide. This booklet focuses on building resiliency and reconciliation.

This project focused on creating educational material that is trauma-informed, and strength-based to help foster resiliency in Indigenous youth. The material also aims to promote reconciliation with the Canadian government by means of acknowledging and respecting the cultural traditions of Indigenous people. It concluded with a pilot test of the project at the Maniwaki Woodlands School with the Secondary 1 (grade 7) English and Art class.



## Policy Projects

### ***BUILDING CAPACITY FOR INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING***

This project is building capacity to engage with Public Safety and Federal Provincial and Territorial (FPT) partners on issues related to emergency management in Indigenous communities from a culturally relevant, gender-specific perspective.

For Indigenous women, it is crucial to establish emergency plans that have elements of cultural specificity and community ownership. Indigenous communities must have the agency to determine their own protocols and best practices.

A key aspect of this is recognizing that disasters create situations of heightened stress, incredible anxiety, panic, trauma and re-traumatization. Services that are responsive to the physical, emotional, and cultural needs of Indigenous women are essential for disaster planning.

### ***CORRECTIONAL SERVICES CANADA CULTURALLY RELEVANT GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS AND REVISION OF THE NATIONAL EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS PROGRAM***

NWAC conducted Culturally Relevant Gender-Based Analysis on the existing women's National Employability Skills Program, compiling a report detailing strengths, weaknesses, gaps, and needs for improvement within the program.

### ***ELECTIONS***

*Inspire Democracy Workshops:* NWAC advised Elections Canada on the planning, design, and preparation for three workshops, which were aimed at expanding the Elections Canada's (EC) existing project Inspire Democracy to include Indigenous electors.

*Intervener Analysis- Indigenous Women and Girls:* Through NWAC's extensive networks, potential interveners for Elections Canada (EC) engagement were identified. A culturally relevant gender based lens and non-partisan approach was applied throughout the strategic analysis.

NWAC identified grassroots Indigenous organizations representing and working with Indigenous women and their communities. NWAC conducted an analysis of interveners, identifying which choices are most appropriate for engagement by Elections Canada.

Recommendations for level of engagement and specific considerations were established for each intervener organization.



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## ***ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY***

In partnership with Environment and Climate Change Canada, NWAC is working to engage and provide input and views on the development and implementation of policies and programs related to conservation, wildlife and biodiversity.

This project promotes increased Indigenous participation in wildlife and habitat conservation and enhances capacity to engage in the development and implementation of policies and programs related to conservation, wildlife and biodiversity.

## **Conferences**

### ***INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE, ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT***

*November 2017*

This national event organized and hosted by NWAC was a cultural exchange and conference celebrating Indigenous women's social and economic empowerment. It featured discussion panels, live performances, speeches, networking opportunities, cultural exchanges and showcased Indigenous cuisine, music, dance, and fashion.

The conference highlighted the achievements of Indigenous women trailblazers. These inspiring leaders told their personal stories on overcoming barriers and achieving success.

### ***EMERGENCY MEETING TO REFORM INDIGENOUS CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES***

*January 2018*

This national event, in collaboration with the Department of Indigenous Services, entailed a meeting on Indigenous child welfare and family services in Ottawa in January 2018.

Federal, Provincial, and Territorial (FPT) governments, National Indigenous Organization (NIO) leaders and other Indigenous partners, experts and service providers in child and family services, provincial advocates, Indigenous youth, Indigenous people with lived experience of the child welfare system, and other stakeholders gathered together to discuss a vision for reform of Indigenous child and family services.

## **Engagement Sessions**

As a grassroots organization, NWAC hosts engagement sessions with Indigenous women across the country to ensure policies, programs and initiatives address the specific needs identified by Indigenous women themselves. Often delivered through NWAC's PTMAs, some recent



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engagement session topics include, but are not limited to the Indian Act, Food Policy, Indigenous Languages, First Nations Housing Strategy.

## Conclusion

As evidenced in this report, it is critical that the Native Women's Association of Canada receive sufficient, stable core funding to ensure stability of its operations. Additionally, significant investment is required by the federal government in order to promote social and cultural initiatives that will help ensure the growth and the independence of women of many nations. The work NWAC does is not only crucial for the Indigenous women across the country, but crucial for Canada as a whole.