

ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 1, 2020 – MARCH 31, 2021



Yours in Strength & Beauty



Presidents Message

It has been one year since I was granted the privilege of taking on the role as President with the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women. The work of this incredible organization never ceases to amaze me and I am so honored to say a few words about our work this past year.

Throughout 2021 the Covid-19 Pandemic continued to have a negative impact on IAAW's ability to offer in-person support, our preferred way of providing support, to Indigenous women and girls. Where we could, we modified programs to enable online communication, program delivery, and support. IAAW is acutely aware of the real-life impact of the on-going Covid-19 pandemic on Indigenous women and girls, and we strive to ensure that addressing this reality is a core aspect in all of our work, and that online delivery will not become the new norm. During this past year we have moved ahead with planning how IAAW can take its support to the next level in the community, both through direct program delivery, and collaborative relationships.

Building on the vision of our Matriarch, Muriel Stanley Venne, the Institute has been moving ahead with plans to establish the "Esquao Resiliency Centre" to facilitate the path to healing for Indigenous women in Alberta and western Canada. The Esquao Centre will be a place owned by Indigenous women, operated by Indigenous women, for Indigenous women. We envision

that by utilizing land-based learning, cultural programming, training and other strategies, the Esquao Centre will provide an environment for learning, healing, and transition to Indigenous women empowerment. Over the next number of months we plan to engage with the community on our vision, and to make the Esquao Centre a reality.

Building on its 20+ years of successful advocacy and program delivery experience, IAAW continues to play a key role in improving the lives of Indigenous women and girls in this province. Utilizing our existing network and membership of approximately 450 members, we have hired staff to provide support and guidance to Indigenous women who find themselves involved in the legal system. We have culturally respectful and relevant group programming in addictions, violence prevention, financial literacy, healthy relationships and leadership development.

On the national level, IAAW continues to be represented on the national board of the Native Women's Association of Canada, and to engage in discussions at the national and international level on matters impacting Indigenous women and girls.

Please take a moment to peruse this year's Annual Report which highlights some of the incredible work that IAAW has done this past year, and will continue to do as we move forward. I am so very proud and honoured to work alongside the dedicated board and staff at IAAW to make life better for Indigenous women, girls, and families.

Respectfully,



Lisa D. Weber,
President



CEO Report

IAAW has experienced great success and growth over the past year, despite the COVID-19 pandemic changing every aspect of our lives. While large portions of the world shut down to prevent the spread of the virus and protect the health of individuals, IAAW continued to work hard to provide important supports for Indigenous women in Alberta. With continued collaboration with various partners, we are more equipped than ever to promote and support Indigenous women in Alberta as we come out of this pandemic.

IAAW is unique in the fact that we work to improve the chances of success in the big city while being able to reach out to outlying communities as best as we can. With the pandemic changing many of our day-to-day activities and the transition to online programming, we expanded our programs beyond the Edmonton area to communities across the country.

Last year, through the Indigenous Skills Employment Training program we opened doors to more Indigenous women advancing themselves at post secondary institutions. With additional funds we hope to increase our numbers and expand to more employment initiatives. Many women are apprehensive about getting back into the workforce; with encouragement, IAAW staff hope assist women in getting back to our new normal.

From the bottom of my heart, I appreciate the continued support from individuals, funders, and department contacts that we spend countless hours alongside. I am so proud of the work that we have done over the past year, and I look forward to our continued growth in the coming years.

Sincerely,



Rachelle Venne,
CEO





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Our Vision Statement

With grace and power, Aboriginal women express their Esquao spirit.

Our Mission Statement

IAAW provides advocacy, programs and services for advancement of the roles and achievements of Aboriginal women.

Our Values

We practice and promote respect, dignity, equality, sharing, and cooperation in our efforts to advance social justice for Aboriginal women in Alberta.

Our Mandate

1. Recognize and promote the leadership of Aboriginal women in Alberta;
2. Assist Aboriginal women in establishing local representative groups;
3. Develop relationships to promote the human rights and dignity of Aboriginal women and their families, and;
4. Address economic, social, cultural and political issues at the provincial, federal, and international levels as they impact Aboriginal women in communities.

Organizational Profile

The Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women (IAAW) recognizes the role, value, and achievements of Indigenous women in society and raises awareness around the challenges they face.

We are a non-profit organization based in Edmonton though we conduct outreach to several communities throughout Alberta. We value the support and partnerships of 500 individual and corporate members.

Our projects, services, and programs are developed by and for Alberta's Indigenous women.

Projects are dedicated to Indigenous women living on and off reserves, on and off settlement lands, and within rural and urban settings.

Incorporation Information

- A. Scope of Territory: Provincial/ Territorial
- B. Incorporation Information: Non-Profit Society
- C. Charitable Status: In process of applying for Charitable Status
- D. Date of Incorporation: September 29th 1995



Organizational Objectives

Objective 1.

Develop and deliver services that advance the individual capacity of Aboriginal women, their families and communities.

Objective 2.

Create opportunities to address discrimination against Aboriginal women.

Objective 3.

Identify and promote opportunities for Indigenous women to participate in policy development and decision-making.

Objective 4.

Celebrate the strengths and achievements of Aboriginal women.

Objective 5.

Establish forums and networks for Aboriginal women to exchange information and experiences.

Board of Directors

IAAW President, Lisa Weber

Lisa Weber is a practicing lawyer who has worked for Aboriginal governments, communities, organizations, and individuals. For the past 9 years she has been an adjudicator and Deputy Chief Adjudicator in the Independent Assessment Process, and more recently has turned to private practice in areas of Child Welfare, Family Law, and Aboriginal Law. She has been counsel for IAAW in the MMIW Inquiry since 2017 and received the Institute's Social Justice Award in 2017. In 2018 Lisa received the National Zenith Lexpert Mid-Career Excellence Award for achievements in Aboriginal Law. Lisa is a proud Metis woman and lives in Sherwood Park.



Founder and Former President, Muriel Stanley Venne, C.M., A.O.E, B.A. (Hon.)

At 84 years young, Muriel is a special advisor to the Board and CEO. Muriel co-created the Esquao Awards and worked very hard to bring awareness to the violent deaths of Aboriginal women. Under her leadership IAAW and the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) achieved intervener status on three important cases which had implications for all women. She has received highest honours in Canada and Alberta - the Order of Canada, and the Alberta Order of Excellence. In 2017, the Muriel Stanley Venne Provincial Centre was the first Alberta government building named after a Métis woman.





Vice President, Marggo Pariseau

Marggo Pariseau presently works at IAAW, contracted to work with women leaving federal correctional facilities. Marggo is comfortable most behind the scenes and has been recognized in 1992 with the YWCA Women of Distinction, and in 2012 with the Queen's Jubilee Diamond Award. She was appointed to the Government of Alberta's First Nations Women's Council on Economic Security in 2015, and currently serves as the community Elder for the Council. Marggo has supported Aboriginal women for over 40 years in various capacities. She was the Manager for 20 years at the Women's Emergency Accommodation Center, 5 years as an employment counsellor and 15 years as a family support worker.

Treasurer, Lisa Higgerty

Lisa Higgerty is the Executive Director of the Hinton Friendship Centre. More than 15 years ago, Lisa started a career advocating for the victims of sexual abuse, resulting in the Mamowichihitowin, an innovative holistic program in rural Alberta unique to Canada. She has since expanded the mandate of the program to cover all types of domestic violence in west-central Alberta.

Director, Josie Nepinak

Josie Nepinak is the Executive director of Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society, the only Indigenous urban women's shelter in Alberta. She has a strong background supporting Indigenous women and families dealing with family violence and facing complex social issues. She has a degree in women's studies. Josie believes in a balanced approach that combines Indigenous wisdom and healing with contemporary western methodologies to promote the health and well-being of First Nations, Inuit and Métis individuals, families and communities.

Director, Irene V. Loutitt

Irene was born and raised on the Paddle Prairie Settlement, one of ten siblings and is a fluent Woodland Cree speaker. Presently employed as an Indigenous Health Coordinator, Alberta Health Services, Indigenous Health Program, Irene has also been an Indigenous Liaison in schools for a total of 15 years (Ft. McMurray Catholic Schools and Wolfcreek School Division, Ponoka); an Indigenous Liaison, Children's Services, Wetaskiwin, AB and various other roles. Irene is also a Member of the Elders Advisory Committee for the Alberta Teacher's Association.



Elders Circle & Knowledge Keepers

Our Circle includes:

The Elders Circle and Knowledge Keepers bring IAAW board and staff unlimited joy and good medicine. Our Elders and Knowledge Keepers have a great connection to culture through stories.

By providing young women and leaders with support and guidance for the future, they can make a positive difference on the health of women with lasting benefits for future generations. IAAW recognizes and values Elders' unique contributions to thought, action, leadership, and conscious change.

- Mary Brown, Slave Lake
- Lorretta Bowen, Edmonton
- Myrtle Calahasen, Edmonton
- Alma Desjarlais, High Prairie
- Marion Le Rat, Calgary
- Elsie Paul, Edmonton
- Lorraine Savard, Edmonton
- Blanche Bruised Head, Lethbridge

Programs & Services 2020-2021

IAAW provides a range of empowering programs and services to Indigenous women that aim to reduce barriers and promote equal access to opportunities for women in our community. In the 2020-21 fiscal year, 90 women participated in our programs.

■ Leadership Development

Esquao Youth Leadership Development Program

■ Poverty Reduction

Empower U – Financial Independence Training
Financial Connect – Canada Learning Bond
Financial Empowerment Champions (FEC)
COVID-19 Relief Support

■ Achieving Justice

Elder Services Corrections Canada-Edmonton Parole
Indo-Canadian Women - Culturally appropriate and safe assistance through home visitation for survivors of violence
Transition Services
Advocacy Services

■ Violence Prevention

Indigenous Women's Violence Prevention
Healthy Relationship Circle

■ Housing

Housing Diversion Program

■ IAAW Capacity Building

Office of the Federal Interlocutor
Employment & Training
Indigenous Skills Employment & Training

■ IAAW Community Outreach

Short-term workshops and training sessions on various topics
Networking and support services for women who would like to start programs in their community
Referrals and connections to services.

Supports to Aboriginal Women During Covid-19

IAAW provides a range of empowering programs and services to Indigenous women that aim to reduce barriers and promote equal access to opportunities for women in our community. In the 2020-21 fiscal year, 90 women participated in our programs.

The IAAW focused supports on Indigenous women coming out of federal correctional facilities, fleeing violence or experiencing poverty. With funding from Indigenous Services (\$135,000), United Way (\$71,867) and City of Edmonton (\$10,000), IAAW was able to support 382 individuals affected by COVID-19. This does not include over \$70,000 in Housing Supports through our partnership with Homeward Trust Edmonton and over \$65,000 in Employment and Training dollars providing to Indigenous women through IAAW's Indigenous Skills Employment Training Initiative. This funding ended May 31, 2021.

IAAW built a partnership with Kapawe'no First Nation and secured funds for two system navigators through the Government of Alberta Indigenous Women's Initiatives, which also added to the services we could offer Indigenous women.

In our last three program offerings we have had to cap registrations at 100, as they are so popular across Alberta and Canada. In house, we had to revise our Policy and Procedures to accommodate working from home and changing from paper to online registration forms. Evaluations and testimonials that were previously provided in person, changed to online. Even though our office was not open to visitors for the majority of the year, staff were assigned extra cleaning/sanitizing responsibilities. Providing food in a safe way, masks, sanitizer and keeping up to date on the public health restrictions was an added responsibility of all staff too.

It was extremely difficult for staff to provide coaching to participants online, especially when literacy was an issue. Often there were children or pets wanting attention at the same time of our sessions. Anxiety due to keeping the family healthy, increasing cost of living and fear of the unknown are common responses from IAAW participants over this period. Addictions and family violence increased exponentially, resulting in high medical needs, increased disruption in the family unit and often housing instability.

IAAW staff worked non-stop to provide supports to those affected by COVID-19. All staff were equipped with equipment to work from home and all 14 staff are double vaccinated.

"After losing my job in April of 2020 due to Covid and after going through all my savings just to be able to keep a roof over my head, I found myself in a very desperate situation. The covid support program at IAAW was an absolute lifesaver. I honestly don't know what I would have done without the help of Angie and Maureen. They were able to help me with my rent and my power bill and I am extremely grateful and hope to be able to pay it forward one day. Thanks again IAAW!"
- K. D.

Statistics

382 Online Supports Provided

- 50 Participants in Healthy Relationships Violence Prevention Program
- 94 Participants in Youth Mental Health Program
- 34 Participants in Financial Independence Training (poverty reduction)
- 23 Participants assisted with filling out Forms
- 79 Participants received Cultural supports
- 45 Participants received Housing/Rental assistance
- 91 Referred to other Programs

178 Items of Support Provided

- 133 Food Gift Cards
- 24 Laptops
- 2 Chromebooks
- 3 Printers
- 4 Cell Phones
- 12 Internet Services

\$54,043 Total Financial Supports Provided

- \$30,952 Housing
- \$17,800 Food Gift Cards
- \$12,000 Laptops
- \$ 5,291 other supports (bus pass, desk, chair)

FINANCIAL LITERACY

IAAW recognizes that poverty is a critical barrier to success for Indigenous women in Alberta. In partnership with community organizations including the United Way, Bissell Centre and E4C, IAAW is a part of a poverty reduction strategy that aims to increase financial literacy and confidence while opening doors for women to pursue opportunities.

The Financial Literacy Program has three parts:

1. Empower U – Financial Independence Training (FIT)

Empower U Financial Independence Training (FIT) is offered over 20 weeks, consisting of 10, 2-hours weekly sessions with a matched savings component. The program explores participants' relationships with money and its link to trauma and addiction. Throughout the program, participants learn about budgeting, credit, financial priorities, and confronting personal barriers to saving. Participants also meet with financial coaches to support them through financial crises and access additional support, including debt counsellors and volunteer tax services.

2. Financial Empowerment Champions (FEC)

With funding from Prosper Canada, IAAW is one of five FEC communities selected across Canada to deliver financial empowerment interventions through financial literacy education, staff training on integrating financial literacy into other programming, one-on-one financial coaching.

3. Financial Connect (FC)

Funded through the Government of Canada, IAAW has extended their Financial Connect Gatherings to Aboriginal communities to provide access to financial resources in one place, at one time, at no cost. Services offered at gatherings could include tax preparation, obtaining identification, opening bank accounts or RESP, and provide support to individuals applying for government benefits and services.

In 2020, IAAW enrolled 24 participants in the financial literacy program. There was 14 women that successfully completed the program with an overall combined savings of \$4,670. There were a few participants that extended their participation into the 2021-22 fiscal year to complete all financial literacy lessons. The number of women that successfully have completed the program has been lower than in previous years due to a number of issues, many stemming or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.



In addition to improving financial literacy and saving money, participants were also able to:

- Receive cultural teachings
- Pay off debt
- Open RESP accounts

In 2020/21, IAAW:

- Completed three sessions of the Empower U program with a total of 25 participants
- Delivered a three-day 'Train the Trainer' virtual workshop on Basics Financial Literacy to frontline Hinton Friendship Centre staff
- Delivered a financial literacy workshop to 60 students at Braided Journeys
- Provided one-on-one support to 20 women
- Provided financial coaching to 6 women
- Provided 25 women with tax filing support
- Provided 25 referrals, including resources for employment, housing, food security, mental health, education, and more.

"I met a few of my financial goals through the E.U./FIT sessions on how to make a budget and actually follow it. I even learned from Troy from 4 Pillars how I can rebuild my credit. I learned how to work towards breaking my money habits and set more goals to achieve and work towards a little at a time.

I achieved my matched savings goal that I used towards my Asset, by taking my driving course and received my learners in Oct of 2021. I never thought I could do this at 45 years old!! I am pretty proud of myself!!!

My take away from the sessions is that the biggest thing is that I learned that money doesn't have to be the root of all evil; I use to think that all the time. However, over the last few months I have learned to re-say "My money doesn't have to control me anymore; I am in control of my money!!"

- G.D.

Esquao Youth Leadership Development

IAAW offers a youth leadership program to build skills and confidence for women aged 11 to 29. As part of this program, we deliver our well-attended 'Building Our Bundle' youth cultural-teachings program.

- Programming is focused on increasing safety through activities, connection to resources and providing opportunities for community involvement.
- Participants develop public speaking skills, learn more about current events and what makes a healthy relationship.
- Participants find a sense of community while building skills and confidence through summer activities.
- Presentations and short-term activities are offered to group homes and youth groups.

COVID Video Series

Between April and June 2020, IAAW released 15 videos over Facebook Live featuring volunteers, staff, and community members, on topics ranging from public speaking to crafts and cultural teachings. The most-watched video was of Sheryl Sewepagaham sharing her songs. The video has 2.6 thousand views, 85 likes and 36 comments. In total, the IAAW Facebook Live Video series had over 549 likes, 477 shares, and 16.7 thousand views.

Building Our Bundle

In 2020, IAAW introduced the 'Building Our Bundle' online program to address the mental health wellness of isolated youth and promote cultural connection through Elder involvement and crafts. The program has included boys upon request, which was well received.

Building Our Bundle is a six-week online program that is hosted on zoom for Indigenous youth. This program allows youth to create social connections online with Indigenous youth across Canada, connect to their culture, participate in self-reflection activities, developmental health tools, and make crafts. In addition, this program is co-facilitated by Kokum Elsie Paul, and participants connect and receive cultural teachings from the Elder. Each week has a different cultural theme of knowledge that participants can learn from to add to their bundle.

Youth participants have been able to connect online and participate in the program throughout Canada, and some have even joined from the United States of America. Most participants were



from the Greater Edmonton Area. However, we have also had participants from Ontario, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and from two American states, Michigan and Washington.

From December 2020 to March 2021, IAAW held two sessions of Building Our Bundle, with the first session having four graduates and the second session having 26 graduates. IAAW has had additional sessions beyond March 2021, and interest in this program continues to grow. In the future, we hope to expand the program to be in-person and include more land-based teachings. We would also be interested in expanding the program across the country and incorporating teachings from other Indigenous communities.

"My three girls ranging in age from 11-18 attended the Building Our Bundle program. [They] absolutely loved their time building their bundles. They took away some knowledge and skills useful for their daily lives and future selves. Thank you for providing this experience for my girls."

- C. B.

"Swapping stories and listening to other wonderful Indigenous folks share their experiences and knowledge during Building our Bundle with Kokum Elsie Paul, has become my favourite part of my week. It means a lot to have a supportive space to connect and exchange with one another in nurturing, playful, and creative ways."

- K. C. L.

Indigenous Women's Violence Prevention Program

As part of the violence prevention program, IAAW has implemented programs, services, and supportive collaborations that address violence against Indigenous women. In 2020-21, IAAW delivered the Healthy Relationships Program and developed a multi-media resource tool to create awareness and educate others on violence prevention.

Healthy Relationships Program

With the support from the provincial departments of the Status of Women and Indigenous Women's Initiative, Healthy Relationships program is a 12-week program for women at risk of violence. Sessions included cultural and kinship teachings, self-esteem, historical trauma, violence prevention education and Elder teachings. Due to Covid, the Healthy Relationship program was delivered via Zoom, and 21 women participated in 2020.

Violence Prevention Video Series

In winter 2021, IAAW developed an 8-part violence prevention video utilizing IAAW participants and supporters to facilitate discussion and resource sharing. The videos cover a range of personal safety topics, including:

- Building support circles;
- Safety in new and existing relationships;
- Online dating;
- Family conflict;
- and more

Organizational capacity has been built to support women experiencing violence and how to support violence prevention. We have also grown our partnerships with police services, the City of Edmonton, and community members through these videos.



Healthy Relationships Testimonial

This is to acknowledge Kokum Elsie and Maureen for their incredible work around leading women to healthier relationships with one another, their families, their partners & beyond the borders of kinship within our greater community.

Through cultural, traditional, spiritual and women's teachings, Elsie reminded & guided us gently to - the way, a better way of being with oneself. This gentle reminder with her honest lived experiences, asked us uniquely to consider a better way, the only way within each and everyone of us - to challenge what we know our roles to be as iskwewak within a larger system unfortunately, not made for us.

*ai-hiy/maarsi
with appreciation,
S. L.*



Transition Services

IAAW Transition Services have assisted many women over the years to find housing and support their reintegration into society after leaving correctional facilities. Transition services provide support through two main programs: housing support and the Firekeepers Wellness Program.

Fire Keepers

The Firekeepers wellness program is a women's sobriety support group committed to holistic wellness in a safe and sober community. The group recognizes that Indigenous women have unique paths to sobriety and understands that participants must address the root causes of their addictions to heal and grow. Fire Keepers provides a safe space for women to share their stories, learn traditional ways of healing, and experience the support of their peers and Elders.

Many of IAAW's women and youth were vulnerable before the health crisis and found themselves even more so because of it. IAAW understands that Firekeepers is an essential support network and continues to operate safely according to public health guidelines. We remain committed to the continued support of Indigenous women through difficult times.

Housing Diversion Program

The housing diversion program is open to women enrolled in IAAW programs and women who are on parole. The goal of the housing program is to assist and support the women in finding a safe, clean, and comfortable place to live. IAAW aims to make the women feel confident while going through the stressful process of moving and renting while participating in IAAW programming.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates the need for housing and wellness support for those in transition. While IAAW has adapted to public health guidelines, critical information and support sessions were held virtually, but some activities like new home furniture deliveries needed to be done in person with appropriate COVID-19 safety protocols. Transportation remains a barrier to women accessing our supports and negatively affects their ability to get to appointments and view apartments.



In 2020/21, IAAW worked with 45 women and had a housing success rate of 95.6%, with 43 out of the 45 women still housed six months after being placed in housing by IAAW. We spent a total of \$65,187.25 towards supports housing for participants.

In the future, IAAW hopes to expand the program to continue supporting Indigenous women in our community. For 2021, we aim to assist seven women per month and increase our monthly spending on housing supports to \$7,500 a month. Additionally, IAAW wants to expand supports and information provided to women, such as developing a mandatory class on landlord and tenant responsibilities and provide transportation throughout the housing process.

"Firekeepers make the decision to do the work, and can trust that the circle is always here for them."

- Kokum Marggo Pariseau

"... Kokum Marggo was there when I needed someone and that's what most people need, she is a beautiful woman and person inside and out and forever I will remember her as my Kokum as well, she has helped me far beyond anyone could have ever and I thank her for that."

- J. M.

"These last few months have been a rollercoaster of emotions for me and my two children. I never thought I would be able to live on my own with my two kids and raise them as a single mother. If it wasn't for IAAW I would have never been able to accomplish this dream. The workers at IAAW have been checking in on us and supporting us even after we've settled into our new place. It's great to know that they genuinely care, and they are there for us if we need support. My children and I are so much happier, we are enjoying our new home, the parks around us, and the people in our new community. This would not have happened without IAAW, I am so grateful for such a wonderful organization."

Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISET)

In September 2020, IAAW became a new site for the ISET program, as part of the benefits of becoming a new provincial-territorial member association (PTMA) of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC).

IAAW's ISET program provides employment and training support services for First Nation, Métis, Inuit, urban and non-affiliated Aboriginal women across Alberta who are 15 years of age or older. The ISET program supports Aboriginal women to improve their skills through training and education and find meaningful employment. Applicant-based services and one-on-one supports with women who want to improve their skills and their employability.

To be eligible for ISET, participants must be Indigenous women (First Nations, Metis, or Inuit) and over 15. Women seeking funding support must demonstrate that they are unemployed, underemployed, or can demonstrate an immediate risk of being unemployed. Funding available through this program is based on eligibility, assessment, approval, and availability of funds.

From September 2020 to April 2021, IAAW enrolled ten women in this program. Three participants have completed training, with some participants returning to school, becoming heavy equipment operators, and starting careers with Correction Services Canada. To date, have IAAW has delivered \$71,463 for tuition and living allowance.

Support services include:

- **Individual Training Purchases** - Financial assistance to obtain skills for employment. We can help support costs associated with tuition, materials, supplies, childcare and living allowance.
- **Self-Employment Benefits** - Financial support to pursue self-employment. We can help support expenses related to start-up costs, including Business Planning, materials and supplies.
- **Group Training/Special Projects** - Based on regional priorities and interests, the group training provides funding to support training opportunities for employment skills and work experience through community-based projects.
- **On the Job Training** - Developing partnerships with employers to offer temporary funding as an incentive to offset the costs of wages. Employers will have the ability to hire for unique on-the-job work experience tailored to the individual's skill set, education and previous work experience. This initiative will offer a paid work experience to participants to improve their long-term employment prospects.

Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Testimonial

"As a mature student with a family, there are many extra challenges faced with attending post-secondary education. The ISET program has helped me achieve my dream of receiving my Social Work Diploma.

The financial assistance that I received removed stress for myself and my family. Now I will be able to help others as a Social Worker and share my positive experience that I had with this program. Thank you for everything you do and everyone you help! Thank you for helping me reach my goals!"

- A. D.



Annual Esquao Awards Gala

The Esquao Awards were established by Muriel Stanley Venne and Marggo Pariseau in 1995 to counter the negative stereotypes of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit women and celebrate their honour and strength, beauty and accomplishments. Each candidate is nominated by members of their community and must have three letters of support. IAAW encourages family members to nominate their female matriarchs, including their sisters, mothers, grandmothers, or aunts, and select one of the 14 categories where they have made the most impact.

For the unsung heroes, the Esquao Awards may be the first time the recipients discover how much they are loved and appreciated. The winners are the 'Angels Among Us.' Since the inception of the IAAW's Esquao Awards program, 493 Indigenous women from over 90 communities throughout Alberta have been recognized. The Gala event is an integral part of the community celebration and has previously included silent auctions and entertainers. Historically, this has been the primary fundraising event for the IAAW.

The Gala has been an excellent networking opportunity and has been a space to thank Indigenous women that are often not recognized elsewhere. The event also provides space for women to promote connections between Indigenous women and promote leadership opportunities for participants.

In March 2021, IAAW celebrated 17 Indigenous women through a recorded video of the 25th Annual Esquao Awards to allow appropriate social distancing and adhere to the provincial

COVID-19 safety protocols. Over four days, IAAW celebrated and filmed each award recipient, and the video was released on July 2nd, 2021, on YouTube and Facebook. To view the ceremony, please visit [here](#). We hope to hold the 26th Annual Esquao Awards in May 2022.





Benefits of the Esquao Awards

- Corporations and government leaders participate in recognizing the positive work of Indigenous women in communities.
- Connections are made between government and women who could be consulted on upcoming policies and community involvement activities, expanding their social networks and IAAW's networks.
- Negative stereotypes of Indigenous women are challenged with positive examples of Indigenous women building strong communities.
- Opportunity for Indigenous women and girls to find positive role models.
- Indigenous communities come together to recognize the accomplishments of local women.
- Indigenous communities' showcase, celebrate and embrace their beautiful cultures and traditions.

2020/2021 Esquao Award Recipients

Circle of Honor

AFN Regional Chief for Alberta, Marlene Poitras

Lifetime Achievement

Edna Blyan

Arts

Marticia Brown

Culture

Amanda Gould

Pollyanna McBain

Rosemary (Rose) Crowshoe

Health & Medical

Rain Desjarlais

Community Involvement

Andrea Rosenberger-Deleeuw

Donna Knebush

Eva John Gladue

Rosalie Nicholls

Rose Mary Nipshank

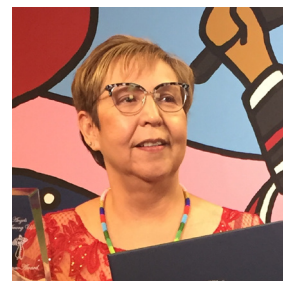
Education

Kristina Kopp

Terri Suntjens

Justice & Human Rights

Janice Randhile



Justice Initiatives

IAAW has extensive experience in collaborative action planning on reforms needed to improve outcomes for Aboriginal women accessing or involved in the justice system.

Current justice initiatives include:

- Implement priorities as part of the family engagement with Awo Taan Healing Lodge on the National Action Plan arising from the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls;
- Advocacy assistance to Aboriginal women who are pursuing justice in the courts for their missing or murdered family member
- IAAW has applied to several funding sources including affordable housing, resiliency centre and supports for women after court.
- Our partnership with Indo Canadian Women to improve training to improve cultural competencies for home visitations by social workers continues.
- IAAW participated in various Government of Alberta and City of Edmonton engagements on justice, including Claire's Law, Victims Fund Review, Human Trafficking, Police Act Review, and Metis and First Nation Women's Economic Security Councils.
- IAAW CEO and two board members were appointed to the Alberta Joint Working Group on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women to build a plan to implement the Calls for Justice, which is expected to be released in November 2021.
- Continue to build positive relationships with government, police and community developed over 25 years.



Summer 2020 Programming

Two Summer Youth Activity Coordinators were hired to facilitate educational and recreational programs for youth from late June until the end of August 2020. Due to complications with the pandemic happening during this time, programs were entirely virtual.

Typically, IAAW hosts an annual youth leadership camp during the summer for youth aged 12-17. Because of the pandemic, IAAW could not host in-person camps and elected to hold programming over Zoom and Facebook live in 2020.

Through online programming, the two summer youth activity coordinators provided events and activities with individual enrollment per program, which enabled the two coordinators to provide access to content to new and returning participants from Edmonton and beyond. Ideas for programming were based on a desire to educate women and improve their lifestyles.

In addition to IAAW's summer live streams, nine events were hosted in July, and 28 were hosted in August. Some were one-off events, while others occurred over multiple sessions.

Some programs held over summer 2020 included:

- Honouring Our Moon - a four-part discussion series on Indigenous female empowerment;
- Book Club – an eight-week long group on Maria Cambell's 'Halfbreed'
- Self-Defence – four-part series that provided information on personal safety, and physical training tips
- Standalone workshops on Cree Language, Guided Mediation, Elder Teachings, Sustainable living, Metis Jigging session, and yoga and Zumba sessions



"I attended a self defence session instructed by Caura Wood and I greatly appreciated the opportunity to not only learn how to physically protect myself in potentially dangerous situations, but also the correct mindset and words to use when in these situations.

I have never considered the latter before, and was taught a great deal about all of the various aspects of keeping myself safe. I've actually previously attended a self-defence session by Caura before, but I still learned a lot of new information and am glad I attended again.

This is a session all our women should view or attend if able, as it is imperative to our safety as Indigenous women. Thank you Caura & IAAW!"

- S. T.



2020 Engagement on a National Action Plan on Missing and Murdered Women and Girls in Alberta

During the summer of 2020, IAAW engaged with families of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) on identifying priority actions for a National Action Plan to address violence against Indigenous women and girls.

Based on the 231 Calls for Justice from the Final Report on the National Inquiry into MMIWG, IAAW collaborated with the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society to conduct a province-wide consultation with families of MMIWG and other Albertans. This engagement aimed to identify recommendations for effective action, including best practices in violence prevention and methods to measure the impact of effective action.

As per the project committee's recommendations, IAAW built upon existing relationships we have with families of MMIWG and had three different types of engagement. We engaged with 28 family members and consulted with 172 Indigenous and non-Indigenous Albertans from across the province of Alberta through a survey, and with four key informants through Storytelling.

The stories from the participants were powerful, painful to speak, and difficult to hear. They spoke about multiple traumas they had personally experienced and witnessed across multiple generations in their families. At the same time, their stories are sites of survival, resistance, and

hope.¹ The story of Indigenous historical trauma is incomplete and is itself wounding if it fails to include the elements of survival, strength, and the potential for healing and health in spite of prolonged adversity.²

¹ Smith, L. T. (2013). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. Zed Books Ltd

² White, Bill (n.d.) *Intergeneration healing: recognition, resistance, resilience, and recovery*. Faces & Voices of Recovery. <https://facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/blog/2018/11/30/intergenerational-healing-recognition-resistance-resilience-and-recovery/>

Key Findings

- **It is Time to Consult-ACTION a National Action Plan.**

This means Consultation and Action must occur simultaneously to facilitate effective and immediate radical and sweeping changes in the laws, policies and governance of law enforcement in Canada that are mandated to address healing, long-term solutions, ending genocide, tackling the root causes of violence, and improving the quality of life of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people.

- **Families of MMIWG and other Albertans want to be a Part of the Partnerships.**

Engagement must facilitate reconciliation between Indigenous people and all of these stakeholders by utilizing Indigenous culturally informed and led values, philosophies, and knowledge systems.

- **Involve Indigenous Allyship.**

Many families of MMIWG and other Albertans want Indigenous allies to be recognized, supported, and protected by all governments, institutions, industries, and services.

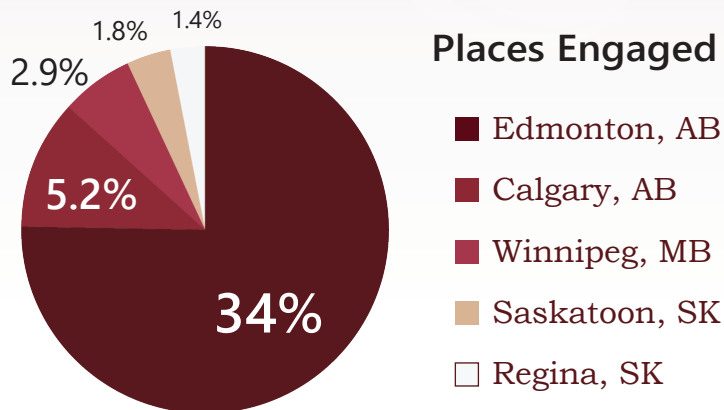
- **Implement ALL of the Calls for Justice according to the important Principles for Change.**

They propose 43 actions in 22 priority areas as a place to start, and that priority setting and the planning and implementation that needs to follow must include them, and Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQQIA organizations.

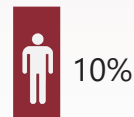


2020 - 2021 Reporting Statistics

Facebook



342.3K People Reached



Gender of Followers

Engagements on Facebook

99.8K People Engaged

1.7K Followers

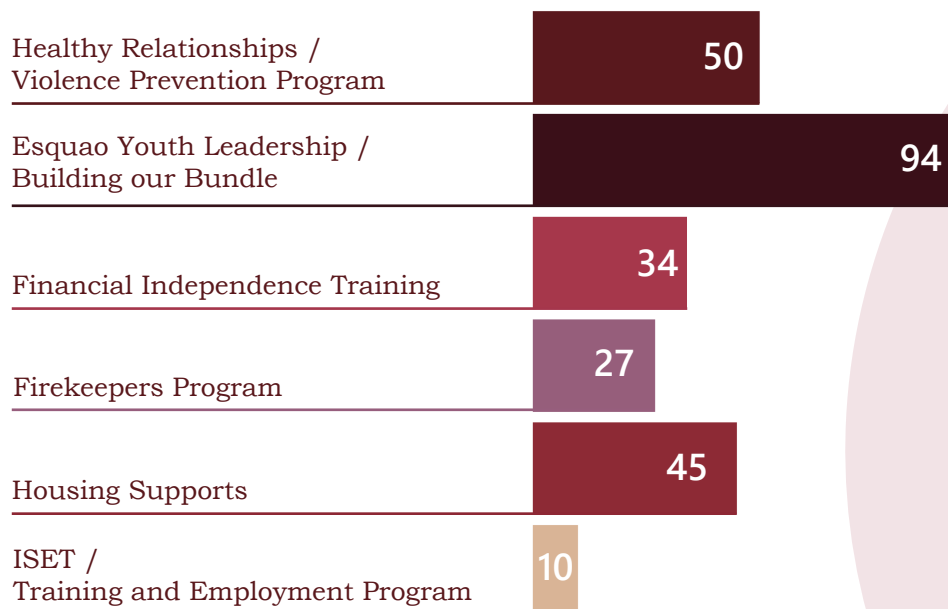
7.3K Page Likes

6.7K Links Clicked

1640 Shares

98 Posts

Participation





Thank you!

ATB Financial

City of Edmonton - Indigenous Relations

Devon Energy

Government of Alberta – Status of Women

Government of Alberta / Indigenous Relations

Homeward Trust Edmonton

Indigenous Services Canada

Native Women's Association of Canada

Prosper Canada (E4C Fiscal Agent)

United Way of the Alberta Capital Region



Contact Us

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