Indigenous Matriarchs 4
Indigenous students attend the virtual reality program at Emily Carr University of Art + Design

Getting Rooted
Refocusing the Roots of Social Innovation
A TRADITIONAL & MODERN KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Social Innovation is about developing new solutions to social, economic, and environmental challenges.

If social innovation is going to change the world, it must include Indigenous voices. Indigenous people have an important role to play in ensuring that we create a world – a planet and a society that can live in harmony. The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples have created courses designed to empower Indigenous people interested in social innovation and help practitioners working in government, finance, and innovation to better support and collaborate with Indigenous innovators.


Would you like to share your story? CAP is looking to interview Indigenous Innovators about their social innovation journeys. Reach out to m.damiani@abo-peoples.org
on the cover

A dancer participating in the Odawa Traditional Pow Wow 2019

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- TO PRACTICE HOOP DANCING
- TO SPEND TIME OUTDOORS
- TO CONTINUE MY LEARNING ONLINE

The Indigenous Voice is the official publication of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. As one of five national Indigenous representative organizations recognized by the Government of Canada, CAP advocates for the rights and interests of Métis people, non-status/status Indians living off-reserve and the Inuit of Southern Labrador. CAP represents the interests of its provincial and territorial affiliate organizations.

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Congress of Aboriginal Peoples

867 St. Laurent Blvd.
Ottawa, ON K1K 3B1
Tel: (613) 747-6022
Toll Free: 1(888) 997-9927
Fax: (613) 747-8834
Website: abo-people.org

Publisher
Carol Pashko

Executive Editor
Robert Russell

Copy Editor
Thomas Pashko

Design Specialist
Carolyn Beck, B.Des., Beck Designs

Advertising Sales
John Pashko
johnpashko@gmail.com

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Published October 2020
Message from National Chief Robert Bertrand

I am pleased to present the latest edition of The Indigenous Voice, a publication of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP). We are excited to share with our readers news and stories of Métis, Non-Status/Status Indians and Inuit peoples living off-reserve, whom we represent. The Indigenous Voice celebrates the unique heritage, diverse cultures, and outstanding achievements of our communities across Canada.

This edition focuses on the tireless advocacy and efforts of our people to call on all levels of government and fellow Canadians to recognize and uphold the rights, interests, and needs of our off-reserve peoples.

This magazine will be my last as your National Chief and I am pleased to leave the position and the organization in a healthy place and I am very optimistic about CAP's future. We have accomplished many goals and have had much success over the last four years.

I am particularly proud of the work we have done to implement the Daniels Decision ensuring that the voices of the off-reserve/non-status community are heard at all levels of government. To this end, we signed a Political Accord with the Government of Canada to implement the decision. This resulted in the formation of table discussions to influence government programs and policy that impact our people. This could not have been done if we had not re-established the trust that has eroded over the years. We are hopeful that these discussions will be very positive for our people and have a lasting impact on their well-being.

The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples has prospered over the course of my time in office and I have been honoured to lead an organization that works tirelessly everyday to support the many Indigenous Peoples in our community looking for support. It has been a pleasure and I will always have fond memories of our work together.

Like all Indigenous peoples in Canada we are struggling to manage the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and I caution you all to take precautions and follow health guidelines to ensure you and your families remain safe and healthy. I wish you all well and I look forward to participating in the work of the organizations in anyway I can in the future.

Meegwetch,
National Chief, Robert Bertrand

Bienvenue
Message du Chef National Robert Bertrand

J’ai le plaisir de présenter le dernier numéro de The Indigenous Voice — La voix des Autochtones, une publication du Congrès des peuples autochtones (CPA). Nous sommes ravis de partager avec nos lecteurs les nouvelles et les histoires des Métis, des Indiens inscrits et non inscrits et des Inuits qui vivent hors réserve, que nous représentons. The Indigenous Voice — La voix des Autochtones célèbre notre patrimoine unique, les diverses cultures et les réalisations exceptionnelles de nos collectivités de l’ensemble du Canada.

Le présent numéro porte sur la mobilisation et les efforts inlassables de notre peuple qui demande à tous les échelons du gouvernement et à nos compatriotes canadiens de reconnaître et de respecter les droits, les intérêts et les besoins de nos compromettants hors réserve.

La présente revue sera ma dernière à titre de chef national et je suis satisfait de laisser mon poste et l’organisme en bien meilleure santé et j’ai vraiment confiance en son avenir. Nous avons atteint plusieurs objectifs et nous avons conçu de grandes réussites au cours des quatre dernières années. Je suis particulièrement fier du travail accompli pour mettre en œuvre le jugement Daniels qui fait entendre les voix de la collectivité des hors réserve et des non inscrits à tous les échelons du gouvernement. À cette fin, nous avons signé un accord politique avec le gouvernement du Canada pour mettre ce jugement en œuvre. Il a permis d’organiser des discussions propres à influencer les programmes et la politique du gouvernement qui touchent notre peuple. Cela n’aurait pas été possible si nous n’avions pas rétabli la confiance qui s’était érodée au fil des ans. Nous espérons que ces discussions seront très profitables à notre peuple et qu’elles auront une influence durable sur leur bien-être.

Le Congrès des peuples autochtones a prospéré au cours de mon mandat et j’ai eu l’honneur de diriger un organisme qui travaille sans relâche chaque jour à l’appui des nombreux Autochtones de notre collectivité qui cherchent un soutien. Ce fut un plaisir et je chéris toujours notre travail en commun.

Comme tous les Autochtones du Canada, nous nous efforçons de faire face aux répercussions de la pandémie de COVID-19 et je vous prie tous d’être prudents et de respecter les directives en matière de santé pour vous préserver, vous et votre famille, et rester sains et en bonne santé. Je vous souhaite bonne chance et j’ai hâte de collaborer avec les organismes d’une manière ou d’une autre, dans un proche avenir.

Meegwetch,
de Robert Bertrand, Chef National
Getting Rooted: Refocusing the Roots of Social Innovation in Policy Making

By Molly Damiani

“It is in the roots, not the branches, that a tree’s greatest strength lies.”
— Matshona Dhliwayo

You have likely heard of social entrepreneurship. Canada is a hot spot for it. In fact, the Thomson Reuters Foundation’s 2019 survey on “The 10 Best Countries to be a Social Entrepreneur” awarded Canada the top spot. Since 2012, when Canadian legislation first recognized the sector, it has grown exponentially. People have been eager to embrace an alternative business model and a leadership role in tackling social, economic and environmental issues. Social entrepreneurial success is uniquely determined not only by one’s generated profit but by one’s social impact.

Have you heard of social innovation? Social innovation is to social entrepreneurship what a tree is to a branch. Social innovation is an encompassing approach to social change. Frances Westly, co-founder of Social Innovation Generation (SIG) says it can be “any initiative (product, process, program, policy, project, or platform) that challenges and, over time, contributes to changing the defining routines, resource and authority flows or beliefs of the broader social system in which it is introduced. Successful social innovations have durability, scale and transformative impact.” Simply put, social innovation is about finding new solutions to social issues that are more sustainable, efficient, and equitable than current approaches.

According to the Centre for Social Innovation (CSI), social innovation includes practitioners using policy (e.g. laws and institutions), markets (e.g. business and trade) and culture (e.g. values and education). As such, it is clear why the Government of Canada would see social innovation as something they should be welcoming and engaging critically with. The policies they enact around it define the sector and as such it is necessary for all involved practitioners to understand the roots of social innovation in Canada, existing models that they can learn from, and opportunities to grow and improve.
Social innovation is at its roots an Indigenous notion core to many cultures across Canada. Andrea Johnston, Founder of Johnston Research Inc., explains that traditional Indigenous knowledge is embedded in social innovation through a diversity of characteristics and values. Common ones include (1) Inclusion, (2) Collaboration, (3) Global Impact, (4) Local Impact, (5) Sustainability and (6) Creativity. They will take on different forms based on the community and the project they are a part of, but it is this creativity and flexibility that makes this such an impactful and promising approach to creating social change.

Indigenous innovators across the country have been and continue to be leaders in this sector, spearheading innovative enterprises, and setting a high standard for ethical and impactful business practices.

**Sunshine Tenasco**, a social entrepreneur from Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, Que., established *Her Braids* to teach people about Indigenous clean water issues. She also organizes Pow Wow Pitch, a pitch competition for Indigenous entrepreneurs.

**Mark Marsolais-Nahwegahbow** is the founder of the social enterprise Birch Bark Coffee Company, which has been recognized nationally for its work in raising awareness and funds to provide First Nations communities in Canada with access to clean water.

In spring of 2019, the Government of Canada announced the names of the organizations who would receive funding and play key roles in the implementation of the Investment Readiness Program (IRP). The IRP stems from the government's 2019 Social Innovation and Social Finance Strategy, which explored models of social finance and social innovation in Canada and offered suggestions for growing and strengthening the social finance space in Canada.

The premise behind IRP is that, by addressing common funding challenges amongst social purpose organizations (non-profits, charities, co-operatives, social enterprises and for-profits with a social mission) through the allocation of capital, organizations can focus their efforts on the persistent and complex social and environmental challenges plaguing our society and bring about sustainable change. The funding is structured as a $50 million investment over the course of two years coordinated by readiness support partners tasked with providing funding and support to a variety of organizations across Canada.

The ability for Indigenous innovators and communities to gain access and participate in the social innovation space is only possible when systems are set up to be inclusive of Indigenous innovation informed by traditional knowledge. Promoting inclusivity within the context of the fund has already begun with the summer 2018 introduction of the Social Innovation and Social Finance Strategy Co-Creation Steering Group and its report *Inclusive innovation: New ideas and new partnerships for stronger communities*. All recommendations in the report were developed in conversation with First Nations, Inuit and Metis groups.

As the community of social entrepreneurs and innovators in Canada continues to grow and the opportunities through the Investment Readiness Program and Social Finance Fund are furthered, it is critical to keep the Indigenous roots of social innovation embedded in our projects and behaviours. Shifting our shared values across sectors, businesses, and organizations to establish an authentic collaboration will strengthen our endeavours and enhance our impact.
Housing Crisis

By Hope Rumford-Rodgers

“The way that Canadians understood homelessness by the Canadian definition was about not having a house to live. I realize that it was more about a dispossession from something called ‘all my relations’ which is an Indigenous worldview where everything is interrelated, interconnected.”

- Jesse Thistle in From the Ashes

Home is more than just a roof over your head. But what if even that is hard to access? Indigenous peoples living off-reserve in Canada face higher rates of homelessness and housing issues than the general population. This problem will only get worse as the population grows and more people move off-reserve and into urban centres.

The 2016 Census produced some significant data points: 78% of Indigenous people live off-reserve; approximately two-thirds (67%) live in an urban area of at least 30,000 people; and 18% of Indigenous households are in core housing need (compared to 12% of non-Indigenous households).

“Indigenous homelessness is [...] the outcome of historically constructed and ongoing settler colonization and racism that have displaced and dispossessed First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples from their traditional governance systems and laws, territories, histories, worldviews, ancestors and stories.”

- Jesse Thistle in The Definition of Indigenous Homelessness

These high rates of housing issues have come about through mechanisms of colonization such as the reserve and Métis scrip systems, forced relocation of Inuit peoples, residential schools, and the 60s Scoop, among other past and contemporary systems. Colonization has disturbed and disrupted Indigenous peoples’ connection to land and territory and systems of governance and has inflicted trauma that has been passed down for generations.

These individual and community traumas have resulted in broader socioeconomic deficits, creating further obstacles to safe housing. For example, Indigenous people are overrepresented in Canada’s criminal justice and child welfare systems – systems which often fail to support adequate transitions to housing. Some Indigenous demographics are especially likely to be in need of housing in order to escape harm and danger. This includes women, youth, the elderly, 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, and people with disabilities.

“It was the community around me and the relationships and the love that people gave me that got me off the streets. We need to do that for Indigenous people, we need to empower Indigenous voices and Indigenous knowledge so they can get off the streets themselves and be the people they’re supposed to be in society, so they can contribute in a good way.”

- Jesse Thistle in From the Ashes
So, what is to be done? The Government of Canada has developed a distinctions-based Indigenous Housing Strategy that provides services through three national organizations representing First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. But this strategy largely neglects Indigenous peoples living in urban, rural, and northern parts of Canada and not on First Nations reserves. These Indigenous people access housing services through non-profit Indigenous housing organizations, but consistently lack the funding needed to meet the demand for housing supports.

The housing crisis for Indigenous peoples requires immediate and effective action from all levels of government to provide funding and support the work of Indigenous organizations providing housing services. The federal government should establish a fourth Indigenous Housing strategy alongside the three distinctions-based housing strategies that includes specific programs and investments to address the housing needs of Indigenous households in urban and rural areas. In addition, Indigenous services supporting wellness and overall well-being should be funded alongside housing programs, as they are essential to addressing the needs of the whole person in culturally-relevant ways.

*A household is in core housing need if its housing does not meet one or more of the adequacy (not requiring major repairs), suitability (enough bedrooms), or affordability (costs less than 30% of before-tax household income), and it would have to spend 30% or more of its before-tax income to access local housing that meets all three standards. See https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/data-and-research/core-housing-need for more information.

References:

*Jesse Thistle, From the Ashes

*Jesse Thistle, Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada

*Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (2018), A FOR INDIGENOUS BY INDIGENOUS NATIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY: Addressing the Housing Needs of Indigenous Families and Individuals in the Urban, Rural and Northern Parts of Canada


“Housing is a prominent issue for the 80% of Indigenous people who live off-reserve. Change in housing policies is imperative | Le logement est un problème de premier plan pour 80% des Autochtones qui vivent hors réserve. Un changement dans les politiques de logement est impératif.”
Indigenous Languages

The state of Indigenous languages

By Hope Rumford-Rodgers

Indigenous languages are sacred. They carry culture, community, and history and are extremely powerful. Many have been preserved and passed on through the strength and resilience of Indigenous peoples, despite efforts to erase them.

Languages are not only culturally significant: knowing one’s culture and speaking one’s mother tongue has been linked to improved health outcomes among Indigenous populations in Canada, New Zealand, Latin America, and the United States. Despite efforts to preserve and transmit Indigenous languages, without significant increase in support and programming, many Indigenous languages in Canada will become extinct.

Both scholarly research and national inquiries such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report reveal concerning facts regarding the state of Indigenous languages in Canada. Of the approximately 1.6 million Indigenous people in Canada, only 260,000 of those are able to converse in their mother tongue. Of the 60 distinct Indigenous languages, some studies report that only 3 have any chance of survival. These dire statistics highlight the urgency of addressing Indigenous language loss.

Also signaling the need for imminent action, the United Nations (UN), on Dec. 18, 2019, adopted a resolution to “draw attention to the critical loss of Indigenous languages and the urgent need to preserve, revitalize and, promote Indigenous language.” The UN subsequently declared 2022-2032 to be the International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

How Did We Get Here?

Indigenous languages and cultures have been threatened and attacked through colonial institutions and systemic devaluing of Indigenous languages in dominant society in Canada. Through the Indian Residential School (IRS) system, children were taken from their families and forbidden to speak their languages while being instructed...
instead in English or French. Through the 60s Scoop and the continued removal of Indigenous children from their communities through the child welfare system today, many Indigenous people have not had the opportunity to learn their language and culture while living with non-Indigenous families.

Canada continues to reinforce language hierarchies, most notably via the lack of rights afforded to Indigenous languages. The right to Indigenous language instruction is not guaranteed in the constitution, unlike the English and French languages which fall under section 23 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

So, What Next?

Indigenous language loss in Canada is a direct result of colonization, both historical and ongoing, and as such the Government of Canada has an obligation to provide redress. It is further argued that true reconciliation will not be achieved without language reclamation. Many scholars believe that language reclamation will not be achieved in the absence of constitutionally-guaranteed rights.

We must continue to fight for recognition and support of Indigenous languages in Canadian legislation. A multi-pronged approach that addresses individual and systemic factors is needed to address Indigenous language loss. This means understanding the impacts of historical trauma on language loss and language learning; accounting for the unique needs of individuals and communities; challenging language hierarchies that perpetuate the devaluing of Indigenous languages; challenging western constructs of learning and success; and highlighting and further researching the very real positive health aspects associated with speaking one’s mother tongue.

We need to continue to uplift and support Indigenous language speakers and support connections between different generations for language transmission and reclamation.

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A Broken System
Indigenous Over-incarceration

By Stephanie Edgar

The criminal justice system in Canada is becoming Indigenized. Not for the practice of self-determination in justice matters, nor for the establishment of restorative justice principles within the existing legal system or tribal courts. The criminal justice system is Indigenized from the over representation of Indigenous people and the rate is only increasing each passing year.

The Office of the Correctional Investigator issued a statement in January 2020 on the current incarceration rate of Indigenous people in federal institutions. “Over 30% of inmates in Canadian prisons are Indigenous, even though Indigenous peoples make up 5% of Canada’s population”.

The harsh reality is that over representation does not discriminate based on age or gender. It targets children, youth, men, women and 2SLGBTQQIA+. All Indigenous people are at risk of entering the criminal justice system. The Correctional Investigator states that “Indigenous people in this country experience incarceration rates that are six to seven times higher than the national average”.

While conversations about over representation tend to focus on the incarceration rate, the high victimization rate of Indigenous people must also be acknowledged. According to Statistics Canada’s 2014 General Social Survey (GSS) on victimization, approximately 275,000 Indigenous people aged 15 or older reported being victimized by at least one of the eight types of offenses measured in the survey. The crimes measured in the survey are sexual assault, robbery, physical assault, theft of personal property, breaking and entering, theft of motor vehicle or parts, theft of house hold property and vandalism.

Crime and victimization are not caused by any single factor. Apprehension within the child welfare system, poverty, gender-based discrimination, housing and homelessness, food insecurity, human trafficking are all contributing aspects. Indigenous people are particularly vulnerable and face these factors at a disproportionately higher rate than non-Indigenous peoples.

Over representation is a contemporary crisis, but its roots and discriminatory foundation is historical. To understand over representation is to travel back in time to the beginnings of colonization, which amounted to a cultural genocide of Indigenous peoples. Fast forwarding to the British North America Act of 1867, The Indian Act, residential schools and child welfare apprehension, these institutionalized acts and legislation have laid the foundation for systemic racism and over representation in the criminal justice system.

While immediate change must occur within the criminal justice system, all levels of government and departments must act with urgency to correct the problem of over representation. CAP is advocating for systemic change to institutions, governmental policies and legislation across the board. Research on the social determinants of health indicates that targeted resources and programming will improve the overall quality of life for Indigenous peoples. This will positively impact and lower the rate at which Indigenous peoples are criminalized and victimized.

CAP is pushing for policy reform on the justice legislation to include and embed traditional restorative justice principles, standardization of the Gladue report to eradicate its current discrepancies and a national gang de-affiliation strategy.

The current system is not equipped to handle the over representation of Indigenous people. Continued reliance on this broken system will only exacerbate the problem. The solution is self-determination. This empowers Indigenous peoples to be leaders of their own matters in health, education, family and child welfare and justice related issues.

CAP is working to eradicate the victimization, criminalization, and the systemic oppression of off-reserve and non-status Indigenous peoples of tomorrow. We must think of the future generations. It is imperative that they must not become a statistic.

Reference articles:

Daniels Policy Forum
By Maeanna Merrill

On a cloudy morning in March 2020, delegates from across Canada met for the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples’ Daniels Decision and Policy Development Forum in Ottawa. Chiefs and presidents of CAP’s provincial and territorial organizations (PTOs) were joined by other community leaders and experts to discuss the future of CAP’s policy and advocacy in a post-Daniels era.

After an opening prayer led by Elder Jim Smith from the Ontario Coalition of Indigenous Peoples, National Chief Robert Bertrand introduced the main themes and goals of the forum.

“We are not letting the federal government off the hook,” he announced, foreshadowing many of the powerful ideas and feelings that community leaders would share later on.

Andrew Lokan, co-counsel for CAP in the 2016 Daniels case, then spoke on understanding the scope and ramifications of the Daniels decision. “How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. And the Daniels decision was a huge bite,” he said, illustrating the role of Daniels in the monumental process of reconciliation in Canada.

Lokan’s presentation seemed to cement the opinion that knowledge about the Daniels decision should be more easily accessible to CAP’s constituency. One participant recommended a wide distribution of the CAP booklet The Daniels Decision- What’s Possible, available by request from the CAP national office in Ottawa.

After the proposed agenda was introduced, participants requested a dramatic shift in focus from the details of policy issues to a more open discussion on how CAP should advance the interests of its constituency on a national level. Attendees expressed concern for the scheduled small discussion groups and suggested that each PTO be able to present about its work in implementing the Daniels decision. With the agenda adjusted to reflect this input, the conference room became a collaborative space for community leaders to discuss what mattered most.
On day one, the participants discussed community and belonging, dismantling the Indian Act, and mechanisms for addressing land claims and access to rights. The revised format of the forum allowed for each voice to be heard both by other participants and CAP staff. Key themes included the importance that CAP support PTOs rather than direct them; the overall lack of financial resources to implement the Daniels decision; the inherent rights of all Indigenous people to land and resources; and the harm caused by colonial definitions of Indigeneity.

Day two provided PTO leaders with the opportunity to discuss their existing policies, programs and needs. Though the PTOs have significant differences, their leaders all agreed on the urgent need for improved communication and representation on a national level. Day two’s fruitful discussions provided the basis for CAP’s policy statements on topics such as housing, health and justice developed in late March.

From the beginning of the forum, participants were clear that the CAP national office must develop and carry out an action plan to implement the Daniels decision and the Political Accord signed in 2018. They openly called for decisive legal and political action as well as improvements to internal communication and relationships. To honour its commitment to represent the interests of off-reserve Indigenous peoples, CAP will respond to these calls with prompt and directed action.
Voices that will No Longer Speak

By Stephanie Edgar


There is not enough space on the page to list all of the names of our forgotten sisters. We must speak and hear these names. They are people. They are Indigenous women. They have left us too soon for the Spirit World.

Indigenous women prior to colonial contact were highly revered, holding stature in the community. Sexist systems of oppression were not conducive to a way of traditional life. Colonialism plagued Indigenous peoples. It plagued their social, cultural, economic and political systems. It rots these systems until there is no more and the traditional ways are forgotten.

Stats from the Native Women’s Association of Canada’s Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls fact sheet show that “Indigenous women and girls are 12 times more likely to be murdered or missing than other women in Canada, and 16 times more likely than Caucasian women... Indigenous women are sexually assaulted three times more often than non-Indigenous women, and most of the women and children trafficked in Canada are Indigenous”. These are only a few statistics that highlight the disparities that Indigenous women face.

Colonization and the legacy of cultural genocide of Indigenous peoples have created discriminatory structures within Canadian social, economic and political systems that oppress Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIIA+ peoples. Gender-based violence is rooted in the Indian Act, the discriminatory practices of allocating status, inequality of policing procedures pertaining to Indigenous gender-based violence, and the impoverished living conditions Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIIA+ peoples are vulnerable to. Murdered and missing Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit (MMIWG2S+) is more than a justice issue.

CAP is advocating for systemic change to all levels of government and institutions. Justice, health, education, employment and housing are all areas that need legislative and policy changes. CAP aligns its advocacy with the inquiry’s Calls to Justice and the specific recommendations within each of these areas.

On Jan. 13 and 14, CAP hosted a MMIWG2S+ symposium for constituents to have round table discussions to prioritize (based on immediate need) the Calls to Justice in the MMIWG Inquiry. The symposium was a pre-consultative effort on behalf of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada to help inform the co-development of the national action plan.

While the predicament of the COVID-19 pandemic can derail many agenda items for governments and delay follow through, MMIWG2S+ can’t be one of those postponed items. Accountability and fulfillment of promised action is needed. The national strategy can’t be put on hold any longer. MMIWG2S+ cases have not stopped since the inquiry and the cases are still occurring at a rapid rate.

MMIWG2S+ cases are a direct indicator of the deeply entrenched racism within the Canadian government and how it permeates into the treatment of all Indigenous peoples in Canada. The women listed at the start of the article (and the many more not included in the list) will never be able to speak again, never see or hold their families close, never be able to laugh or love again. How many more cases of MMIWG2S+ must happen before there is change?

NWAC Fact sheet: https://www.nwac.ca/resource/fact-sheet-mmiwg/
CANADA AND THE CONGRESS OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE'S

POLITICAL ACCORD

WHAT IS THE POLITICAL ACCORD?

The Accord is an agreement between CAP and the Government of Canada to set out jointly agreed objectives, policy priorities, and a process for implementation with resources/funding. The goals of the agreement include building a renewed relationship based on rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership with the goal of closing the socio-economic gap between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians.

WHAT LED TO THE ACCORD?

CAP signed previous Political Accords with the federal government in 1994, 1998 and 2005. Back in 1994, CAP was the first National Indigenous Organization to formalize a relationship with government through this type of mechanism. The 2018 Accord was negotiated with government, in particular to reflect a renewed relationship with government in response to the 2016 Supreme Court of Canada's CAP Daniels decision.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED?

The Implementation team at CAP conducted a variety of research and engagement activities to address the joint policy priorities identified in the Accord. Through the Board of Directors continued negotiations with the Government of Canada, an Implementation Forum has been established, and tables have been created to advocate for off-reserve needs in the areas of family programming, MMIWG, language and culture, justice, housing, and post secondary education.

JOINT POLICY PRIORITIES

Aid in the better understanding of the Urban Indigenous landscape, including grass roots perspectives and governance in an urban context.

Research plans and policies in a post-Daniels context to help determine needs and program and service gaps, and improve access to existing programs and services for Non-Status and other off-reserve Indigenous peoples in such areas as family programming, MMIWG, language and culture, justice, housing and post secondary education.

Inform strategies to identify and engage with communities, organizations and populations in an off-reserve Indigenous context.

Review our research online at www.abo-peoples.org
CAP - Being Heard in Ottawa

By Patrick Snider

At the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP), our mission is to represent the interests of off-reserve status and non-status Indians, Métis and Southern Inuit Aboriginal peoples, and to act as the federal voice for our affiliate Provincial and Territorial Organizations (PTO) across Canada.

CAP’s mission is highlighted on our website, in our mission statement and elsewhere. It is a top priority of staff and leadership, and one of the expectations our membership has from our work.

With that in mind, what does representing and speaking for our constituents actually look like?

Good communication goes both ways. Our membership needs to know what’s going on in Ottawa, and Ottawa needs to know what issues are affecting our membership.

To keep our people informed, we monitor topics like proposed bills, studies in committee, debates and new policies coming out of the public service. Our policy team works to keep leadership on top of current events, while the
connections between our board and provincial leadership keeps us updated on provincial matters. Our leaders’ own networks provide them with important insider information.

We share that knowledge internally, to CAP staff, CAP’s executive leadership team and our board of directors. We share it with our membership through articles like this one and regular communications through our web portal and social media.

Those interested in following these topics themselves can use the following resources:

- parl.gc.ca is the official website for the Government of Canada to monitor government committees, debates, bills and activity.

- parlvu.parl.gc.ca is the official website for streaming debates in the House of Commons, Senate and committees.

- openparliament.ca is a popular searchable resource that allows users to input keywords and create automatic alerts when certain topics are mentioned.

These websites have search options that can be used to scan for topics of interest to individuals and communities. To get governments to listen, we must have something to say. The feedback we get from you – from surveys, policy resolutions and conferences – lets us know what to tell the government when they ask what our people need. These messages need to be clear, action-oriented and consistent across our membership. Good relationships require having something of value to bring to the table on our end as well.

So, what value can we bring?

CAP’s unique advantage is our position as the only national Indigenous organization with connections to the off-reserve Indigenous communities in every Canadian province. This is a connection that government departments and members of Parliament depend on to justify their decisions. This is also why we need to make sure that you – our grassroots membership – is engaged and contributing to our work regularly.

Our feedback is only as good as our members make it. The more information we get from our membership, the better we can inform government on effective policies and areas that need resources.

It’s true that simply identifying a need is never enough to ensure action, no matter how pressing that need might be. There are times we need to demonstrate that enough voters can be swayed to challenge the re-election of a member of Parliament. This is the “carrot” of swaying voters positively and the “stick” of criticism and opposition to turn voters away from a party. Engagement – showing the reach of our associates, their engagement on issues and willingness to participate, demonstrate and speak out – is the basis for that power.

CAP’s staff will continue working to support engagement and outreach, connecting members of Parliament to the issues affecting our members, and our members to opportunities to make themselves heard. We ask that you stay engaged and reach out to keep us informed of issues you’re facing as well.
For centuries, technology has been an integral part of Indigenous peoples’ sustenance, self-efficacy and self-determination. This tradition continues today as many Indigenous people gravitate toward disciplines and careers rooted in modern technology. This is why the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples proudly funds the Indigenous Matriarchs 4 (IM4) Lab program at Emily Carr University of Art and Design in Vancouver, B.C.

Led by Indigenous Matriarchs, the IM4 program builds Indigenous expertise in the field of augmented reality/virtual reality/360-degree video (AR/VR/360). The program nourishes and builds capacity in the AR/VR/360 industry, thereby supporting the production of cultural content that serves Indigenous businesses, community development and cultural expression. Renowned Indigenous filmmaker and producer Loretta Todd developed IM4 with the aim of creating an ecosystem of Indigenous AR/VR/360 developers, technicians, storytellers, media professionals and artists across all sectors.

IM4 students are already doing amazing things with the skills learned from this unique program. One such student, Courtney Morin, a bright and articulate Cree who was raised on an Elk ranch in Alberta, is currently learning to speak her native language. Courtney’s goal is to apply the skills she is developing in the IM4 program to create a Cree language app that will help others learn to speak Cree more easily. Her target audience is Indigenous youth in foster care who have lost their native language and who want to re-establish a connection with their culture. Courtney hopes that this app might also inspire other Indigenous youth to pursue careers in AR/VR/360 technologies.

Preston Buffalo, a visual arts major at Emily Carr University, plans on using AR/VR/360 technology to digitally capture Indigenous art and artifacts, not only as a way to preserve their integrity but as a way to share these collections with Indigenous communities across the country.
From health care to construction, science to arts, AR/VR/360 technology can provide our constituents with the cutting edge, in-demand skills they need to enter the labour market in any sector. The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples always strives to help support our constituents to attain the skills they need to engage in meaningful work.

Those interested in receiving funding for skills training under the Indigenous Skills and Employment and Training program can contact our training coordinator, Matthew Gallina, at m.gallina@abo-peoples.org.

Photo: IM4 Workshop - Courtney Durand Morin (left).

Photo: IM1 Workshop participants.
The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) is one of five National Indigenous Organizations recognized by the Government of Canada. Founded in 1971 as the Native Council of Canada (NCC), the organization was originally established to represent the interests of Métis and non-status Indians. Reorganized and renamed in 1993, CAP has extended its constituency to include all off-reserve status and non-status Indians, Métis and Southern Inuit Aboriginal Peoples, and serves as the national voice for its provincial and territorial affiliate organizations. CAP also holds consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which facilitates its participation on international issues of importance to Indigenous Peoples.

Visit our website today to be connected with affiliate organizations, and learn more about our research and projects: www.abo-peoples.org/
Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISET) Program

For Individuals
- Career Planning
- Skills Training
- Work Experience
- Self-Employment Assistance
- Finding a job

For Employers
- Strategies to address labour shortages
- Shared financing to train new employees
- Matching employer needs with skilled staff
- Support industry recognized or customized employer skills training
- Increase workplace inclusion, diversity and retention
- Raise profile with urban Aboriginal communities

Partnerships
The Congress is looking to establish skills training partnerships with businesses and employers. If you are interested please contact the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples ISET Program department.

Contact
Congress of Aboriginal Peoples
867 St. Laurent Blvd
Ottawa, ON K1K-3B1

Tel: 613 747-6022
Web: abo-peoples.org
Email: info@abo-peoples.org
Toll Free: 1-888-9927