

Indigenous Circle Chapter (CCPA) – Annual General Meeting

President’s Report – 2019 – 2020

2019-2020 Indigenous Circle Chapter Executive Committee:

- Cathrine Chambers – President (NS)
- Deva Little Mustache-Gordon – Past-President (ON)
- Vacant – President-Elect
- Amber Sager – Secretary (ON)
- Poonam Therese Dhir – Acting Treasurer (ON)
- Lawrence Murphy - Website Liaison (ON)
- Kym Capuska – Member-at-Large (MB)
- Tina Nash – Member-at-Large (AB)
- Kary-L Little Child – Member-at-Large (BC)
- John Mihaljevich – Member-at-Large (ON)
- Melissa Jay – CCPA Indigenous Director and Board Liaison (AB)

2019-2020 Elder’s Circle:

- Andrea Currie – Elder (NS)
- Elaine Berwald – Elder (ON)
- Bill Thomas – Elder (MB)
- Jamie Warren – Knowledge Keeper (ON)

The Indigenous Circle Chapter has had a very busy year (2019-2020). The activities that ICC has been involved with over the past year are as follows:

Executive Meetings

ICC’s Executive Committee held monthly meetings via teleconference with a short break for the summer.

I would like to offer my most heartfelt gratitude to the 2019-2020 ICC Executive for their support, encouragement, and contributions to the projects and initiatives shared in this report and for bringing so much wisdom and heart to our shared work together. Each of you has contributed

in unique ways to our collective work through conversations and reflections during our monthly meetings, email communications, planning meetings, and virtual sharing circles. From offering encouragement, prayer, and support to exploring new ideas and future priorities to working on policy documents, editing drafts of important communications, and posting our work on social media, it is our collective strength as a Circle that allows us to continue our important work.

I would like offer a special thanks to Deva Little Mustache-Gordon for her contributions as President and most recently as Past-President. Deva led the ICC through some challenging experiences with grace and strength, never losing sight of our shared vision for the Circle, while offering wisdom and guidance in the exact moments we seemed to need it the most. Meegwetch for sharing your unique gifts and strengths as a leader, Deva. I've learned so much from you!

I would also like to take a moment to offer my appreciation for Amber Sager in her role as Secretary, for taking our meeting minutes in a way that reflects our relational approach, while still capturing the essence of our work as a Circle. Meegwetch Amber!

Membership

The Indigenous Circle Chapter's membership has been growing steadily. As of April 2020, the Chapter has 280 members.

Call for Nominations

The Indigenous Circle Chapter is currently accepting nominations (from yourself or another member to serve on the ICC Executive) for the following positions on the 2020-2022 Executive Committee:

- President (1-year term, followed by a 1-year term as Past-President)
- President-Elect (1-year term, followed by a 1-year term as President and a 1-year term as Past President)
- Members-At-Large (two positions are available for 2-year terms)

At the present time, the President-Elect, President, and Past-President, along with the CCPA Indigenous Director and Board Liaisons contribute to the ongoing leadership of the ICC. The intention of the President-Elect position is to learn about the leadership of the ICC and prepare to lead. One of the roles of the Past-President is to offer mentoring to the President and President-Elect. This model and way of supporting each other comes from community knowledge about how we take care of each other.

The Executive is responsible to the membership for the management and conduct of the affairs of the ICC. To be eligible for any of these positions, the nominee must be a member of ICC and be a member in good standing of CCPA. You may nominate yourself or someone you know.

Nominations will be accepted from the floor at the AGM from members attending in person or through teleconference.

The ICC would also like to formally nominate Poonam Therese Dhir as our Treasurer for the remaining 1 year of a 2-year term. Poonam answered our call for support mid-year after our Treasurer was unable to complete the duties of the position. Meegwetch Poonam!

We Matter Campaign

We Matter is an Indigenous-led non-profit organization committed to Indigenous youth empowerment and life promotion. Their key project is the We Matter Campaign – a national multi-media campaign in which Indigenous role models and allies from across Canada submit short videos, written and artistic messages sharing their own experiences of overcoming hardships, and communicating with Indigenous youth that no matter how hopeless life can feel, there is always a way forward. Meegwetch to Jamie Warren for beginning this collaboration and nurturing this new partnership. We are hopeful that our collaboration with WeMatter will deepen and evolve over time.

WeMatter has a new initiative #IndigenousYouthRise: COVID-19 Support Fund where Indigenous youth can apply for a grant of up to \$500 to offer online programs that support their peers during the pandemic. The ICC shared information about this initiative through our social media and also sent information about WeMatter to our membership as a whole, inviting them to get more involved. The ICC plans to host the WeMatter delegation at next year's conference in Edmonton, where they will hopefully present at the pre-conference, as was the plan this year. The ICC is committed to continuing to partner with WeMatter and support their work in whatever ways we can.

Elder in Residence Program

The ICC welcomed Elaine Berwald (White Northern Lights Woman), an Anishnaabe, Mi'Kmaq and Metis Elder to the 2019 conference in Edmonton as part of a pilot project through the CCPA Chapter Support Fund to have an Elder present for the duration of CCPA National conferences. Jamie Warren and Deva Little Mustache-Gordon were instrumental in starting this pilot project from the ground up. This year, the ICC Executive advocated for the ongoing implementation of an Elder in Residence at all future conferences. Following strong advocacy from the ICC, the CCPA agreed to permanently fund and support having an Elder for the duration of all future conferences and a policy outlining processes and best practices going forward was created collaboratively with the ICC. A big Meegwetch to Melissa Jay for her support in moving this project forward at the CCPA National Board level this year and for collaborating on the creation of a policy document to guide this initiative at future conferences!

Open Call Virtual Sharing Circles

The ICC hosted 3 Virtual Sharing Circles over the course of the past year. Virtual Sharing Circles allow members to get to know each other, share more about the work they are doing, and hear about the ICC's current initiatives and activities from members of the Executive Committee. Participants on past calls expressed a desire to have more frequent Virtual Sharing Circles and opportunities to connect with one another. Together with a few interested ICC members, the ICC Executive collaborated on an initiative to offer the Virtual Sharing Circles on a bi-monthly basis, lead by Andrea Currie. Meegwetch to Kym Capuska as well for collaborating on the creation of this idea! ICC members will be invited to participate in these Virtual Sharing Circles through a call out to the membership when a Virtual Sharing Circle is planned. The next Sharing Circle is scheduled for Tuesday, July 7, from 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. EST. The ICC has also planned an virtual All-Nations Drum Circle for Wednesday, June 17 from 7:00 – 8:30 EST as a way to foster connection, culture, and sharing amongst our membership in the absence of gathering in person in the Indigenous Gathering Space at the conference.

Inuit Issues Working Group

The Inuit Issues Working Group was formed in 2018, lead by Andrea Currie, in response to our realization that current efforts to improve and increase mental health services for Indigenous peoples in Canada often do not reflect the unique context of Inuit communities in the North. The working group was made up of ICC members, some of whom are on the ICC Leadership team, and other ICC members who either work or have worked in Inuit communities; all had an ongoing interest in supporting the healing process for our Inuit sisters and brothers. The purpose of the IIWG was to explore the possible ways Indigenous mental health practitioners in Canada's south could be in solidarity with those working in Inuit mental health. There were no Inuk in our working group. The first thing we did was to research written materials that we could read to educate ourselves. Early on, we consulted with Diane Obed from Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) to seek guidance. Diane suggested that we study the National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy (NISPS), as this is the main framework for mental health service development in the regions where Inuit communities are located. We circulated this information and met later via teleconference and shared what we had learned in a Sharing Circle.

At the present time, the Inuit Issues Working Group will be making a contribution to the CCPA membership by writing and submitting an article for Cognica. The article will be a written interview conversation between Andrea and Diane, who has also sent along articles and other questions around Inuit mental health for us to consider. Possible future directions for the working group include sharing these resources and reflections with the ICC membership as a whole. Wela'lin Andrea for taking the lead on this.

Indigenous Code of Ethics Task Force

The ICC is currently connected with the Task Group in charge of revisions to the CCPA Code of Ethics, lead by Tina Nash who is our liaison on the Task Force. The ICC fully supports the inclusion of Indigenous Ethics, Knowledges, and ways of being and working into the Code of Ethics and accompanying Standards of Practice and has been advocating for grassroots consultation with Indigenous practitioners, communities, Elders and Knowledge Keepers to support this process. Community-level collaboration and consultation is essential in ensuring that

updates to the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice that involve Indigenous communities and contexts are done in ways that honour Indigenous knowledges and are consistent with the principles of truth and reconciliation.

Unfortunately, timelines around completion of the revisions did not allow for the kind of community-level consultation that was needed move forward with the Indigenous Communities and Contexts section of the revised Code of Ethics in this way, despite strong advocacy from Tina and the ICC as a whole. As a result, the ICC offered edits and suggestions that would maximize the usefulness of the document that was created. Additionally, Lawrence Murphy and Andrea Currie collaborated on the creation of a statement that was included in the Introduction of the new section that clarified the fact that the information provided was not reflective of Indigenous knowledges and that efforts would be made with regard to future revisions to ensure proper consultation. Meegwetch Lawrence and Andrea for this important contribution!

Tina and the ICC are currently in negotiations with the Task Group around the Standards of Practice document that will accompany the revised Code of Ethics. Because the Indigenous Communities and Contexts section is new, there isn't any accompanying information in the Standards of Practice and a new section needs to be created from scratch. The ICC is hopeful that the Task Group will modify existing timelines to allow ICC leadership to gather safely and work on this and/or consider other possibilities for the creation of the document.

I'm sure I speak for the entire Executive when I say how grateful we are to Tina Nash for her steadfast commitment to navigating the ICC through this massive project. Tina has served on the Task Group as well as been a liaison for the ICC within the Task Group, ensuring our values are accurately represented and advocating for the unfolding of this project in ways that are consistent with Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and practicing. Meegwetch Tina for all your hard work on this!

Treasurer's Report

The ICC remains in good financial standing. Expenditures this year were minimal due to the 2020 conference in Edmonton being cancelled. Expenses included conference call fees and banking fees. The current balance in the ICC account is \$5804.16.

Jordan's Principle Policy Review

Cathrine and Andrea participated in a review and submission of feedback to Health Canada on two Jordan's Principle policies - Clinical Case Conferencing and the Guide for Recommending Professionals. Feedback was given to Health Canada around how to ensure these policies were in alignment with Indigenous knowledges and teachings, that any barriers to services were addressed, and that the policies were based on Indigenous realities on the ground in communities seeking services from Jordan's Principle.

One important example was ensuring the policy did not create additional barriers to service by only allowing "licensed professionals" to make referrals or request supports, and advocating for the possibility of Elders and other informal relational networks within communities to do so. Additionally, we shared our perspective around the unhelpful distinction that was being made between psychotherapy and cultural support, for example healing that involves reconnection with

one's cultural practices, language, ceremony, community events as separate from psychotherapy. As such, we shared that the options presented to families and other health professionals who may refer to Jordan's Principle are either/or - either a psychotherapist coming from a settler perspective in the way they practice, or a cultural support worker who has no education or training in professional counselling/therapy. We shared that we believe this is false and misleading and leads to neglecting the very viable option of referring to someone trained in Indigenous mental health counselling approaches. We felt strongly that this needed to be addressed and corrected, and recommended that necessary training be provided to the Jordan's Principle staff/team leaders so that they know that there is, at least in some places in the country, access to psychotherapists who integrate Indigenous and settler ways of helping, and that those of us who use a Two-Eyed Seeing approach in our work should be the first preference when referring Indigenous kids for mental health services. Our conversation with Health Canada allowed us to share more information with policy-makers about the distinct field of Indigenous mental health practice within the field of psychotherapy and how to better include these resources when offering supports and services to families and communities. Meegwetch Andrea for your thoughtful and poignant recommendations, and for collaborating on this important piece of work.

New Indigenous Director

This year the ICC welcomed a new Indigenous Director, Dr. Melissa Jay. Meegwetch to Amber and Andrea for helping to vet the applications and provide our recommendation to the CCPA Board of Directors. Melissa is a Métis Citizen of Alberta and a member of the Métis Nation of Alberta as well as the College of Alberta Psychologists and the Society for Emotion and Attachment Studies. The ICC had an existing relationship with Melissa through her involvement in the Chapters for Reconciliation Project via the Social Justice Chapter. Melissa brings a wealth of gifts to the ICC, including her passion for Indigenous mental health, a commitment to the principles of decolonization and reconciliation, and a desire to help lead and grow the ICC. Additionally, Melissa brings skills in research and planning, collaborative problem solving, advocacy, and outreach, as well as an orientation to cultural and holistic self-care practices. It has been a treat to work with Melissa so far as she brings such warmth and clarity to the work, and has been an important bridge between the ICC and the CCPA Board of Directors on several projects. Welcome Melissa!

The ICC would also like to offer our deepest thanks to Jamie Warren for her many and lasting contributions to the ICC as both our outgoing Indigenous Director and one of our previous Presidents. Jamie was instrumental in bringing our collective dream of having an Elder for the duration of the conference to life, leading us through the Chapters for Reconciliation project where the principles of Truth and Reconciliation were explored and implemented into the work of other CCPA Chapters, getting the ICC on board with social media, and many many other projects. Jamie's passion for our Circle, her open heart and strength, along with her steadfast commitment to leading the ICC through some difficult waters, while still keeping our focus and momentum going strong leaves a lasting legacy. Meegwetch Jamie! We wouldn't be here without you.

ICC Elder's Council

At the CCPA National conference in Edmonton in 2019, several members of the ICC Executive including Andrea Currie, Deva Little Mustache-Gordon, Jamie Warren and Elaine Berwald, our Elder-in-Residence at the conference, came up with a plan to create an Elder's Council within the ICC Executive to offer guidance and support to the Executive and leadership team, where Elders we have collaborated with along the way as well as ICC members moving out of leadership positions would still be involved in the work of the ICC. Wela'liq, my most heartfelt thanks to Andrea Currie and the Elder's Council as a whole for their support and guidance throughout my time as President and for nurturing the Spirit of our work with their wisdom, guidance, and encouragement. I am forever grateful.

The Elder's Council was founded on the following principles, as articulated by Andrea Currie:

- ∞ in Indigenous communities, according to Indigenous ways of knowing, Elders and Knowledge Carriers play an active and ongoing role in the life and well-being of our communities
- ∞ this reflects the value we place on our Elders and the wisdom they have gained through their life experiences
- ∞ the ICC is rooted in Indigenous values and committed to expressing these values in the way we understand and carry out our work
- ∞ as a Circle that is now 15 years old, we have Elders and Knowledge Carriers that have moved on after holding leadership roles, to make way for emerging leaders, which also reflects Indigenous ways of learning and knowing
- ∞ there is a wealth of knowledge and experience in our ICC members who have contributed as leaders in the past, and we value that knowledge and experience
- ∞ it is a common practice in our communities to invite Elders into our circles, programs, and activities, to help ground the work and to be on call for consultation as needed
- ∞ in accordance with our Indigenous teachings and practices, we now want to create the role of Elder in The Circle, so that the leaders who have gone before us and played a part in the growth of our vibrant Indigenous Circle Chapter continue to be there for us, to help us ground hold the space in which we work together
- ∞ this is also in keeping with our Indigenous ways of honouring our Elders and not brushing them aside
- ∞ this would be an advisory role, i.e. the Elders In The Circle would be welcome to participate in our ICC executive meetings but would not have a vote
- ∞ part of our understanding of this that would be discussed with our Elders and Knowledge Carriers as they move into this role, is that they will support the new and emerging leaders of the ICC by holding space and listening more than speaking at our ICC meetings, which is often how Elders in our communities contribute, by being the back-up and support for the young ones coming up

CCPA Indigenous Practice Award

Members of the ICC Executive contributed to revisions for the CCPA Indigenous Practice Award, which aims to honour excellence in advancing culturally safe counselling and

psychotherapy services to Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Additions to the eligibility criteria included a commitment and demonstration of cultural humility in their practice as a counsellor/psychotherapist, as well as an active and ongoing relationship with Indigenous communities they work with, as well as membership in the ICC. Meegwetch Jamie and Tina for your work around this!

Conference Planning

Although the 2020 conference in Edmonton was cancelled, many ICC Executive members contributed to the planning of our conference activities, including John Mihaljevich, Amber Sager, Deva Little Mustache-Gordon, Andrea Currie, Lawrence Murphy, Kary-L Little Child, Melissa Jay, and Kym Capuska. Meegwetch everyone for your support! We will continue with the work of the Conference Planning Committee this year in anticipation of gathering in Edmonton in 2021. The ICC is committed to ensuring the CCPA National Conferences have a strong Indigenous presence, through participating in Indigenous-themed conference presentations, a Sharing Circle, All-Nations Drum Circle, the Elder-in-Residence program, hosting the WeMatter delegation, our AGM, and ensuring the Indigenous Gathering Space is reserved for our use for the duration of the conference.

Future Horizons

- Strengthening our collaborative relationship with the WeMatter Campaign and supporting their presence at the 2021 conference in Edmonton
- Providing feedback and recommendations to the CCPA Conference Planning Committee on the vetting of Indigenous-themed conference presentations
- Implementing the new Elder-in-Residence policy/process at the 2021 conference in Edmonton
- Pre-conference presentation on reconciliation between Indigenous and settler peoples at the 2021 conference in Edmonton
- Bi-monthly Virtual Sharing Circles for ICC membership
- Indigenous Services Canada Project – survey of membership
- Continuing to strengthen and evolve our social media presence through the creation of an ICC Social Media/Website management plan (Meegwetch to Kym Capuska for representing the ICC on social media on Indigenous People’s Day this year!)
- Exploration of the creation of a Leadership Circle within the ICC Executive Committee to support the growth and mentoring of future leaders and contribute to the ongoing leadership of the ICC through regular roundtable conversations
- Exploring possibilities around the creation of Standards of Practice document to accompany the Indigenous Communities and Contexts section of the revised Code of Ethics
- Exploring the possibility of a proposal for second Indigenous Director position on the CCPA National Board of Directors
- Directory of ICC Consultants for outside settler organizations, vetted by ICC
- Gathering resources for website and social media

Respectfully submitted by,

Cathrine Chambers
President, Indigenous Circle Chapter
Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association