

*CAAN Communities, Alliances & Networks*

# CAAN Newsletter

*Through empowerment, education, and community.*

## *This Issue Includes*

### Continuing To Build Connections

### National Indigenous History Month & National Indigenous Peoples Day

### Upcoming Events

### CAAN Staff Updates

## CONTINUING TO BUILD CONNECTIONS

The summer marks a season of life, connection, and movement. It is a time for community members to gather and reconnect with their kin, teachings, traditions, knowledge, culture, and land. At CAAN, our team is continuing to build new connections and partnerships within our team, Indigenous communities across the land, and other organizations that share similar values, missions, and visions. We are planting and nurturing important work behind the scenes in our programs, policies, and research to strengthen our path forward, while using this season to attend ceremonies, make offerings, and set intentions. We also recognize the resilience and strength within communities, as the summer began with celebrating National Indigenous History Month and National Indigenous Peoples Day in June. Our work continues to align with the seasons, and we continue to move forward with gratitude for all the work, relationships and shared commitment to lift Indigenous knowledge and voices.



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## NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S DAY

Margaret Kisikaw Piyesis, okimâw

June 21st, 2025 – From the Land Now Called Canada

Tansi, relatives.

On this National Indigenous Peoples Day, we lift our voices in gratitude and remembrance. Across the lands, waters, and skies, we honour the wisdom of our ancestors, the resilience of our peoples, and the strength of our Nations.

As the okimâw of CAAN Communities, Alliances & Network, I recognize and celebrate the deep roots that sustain us — our languages, ceremonies, medicines, and kinship systems. Today, we affirm what we've always known: we are not just surviving — we are leading, thriving, and rising.

From coast to coast to coast, Indigenous voices are reclaiming space, restoring balance, and redefining wellness on our own terms. At CAAN, we walk with and for our communities — guided by Indigenous knowledge, lived experience, and a fierce commitment to justice, health, and healing.

Let this day be more than a celebration — let it be a call to action, a moment to reflect, and a promise to keep building a future rooted in our truths.

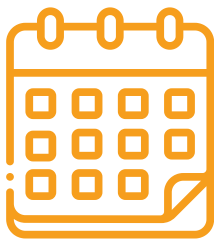
To our Elders, Knowledge Keepers, youth, 2S/LGBTQ+ relatives, and all who carry our communities forward — we see you, we honour you, we walk with you.

In strength, in spirit, and in solidarity





## Upcoming Events



### Mark Your CAAN-lenders!

- **July 26-30, 2025:** STI & HIV World Congress in Montreal, Quebec. *Conference presenters and exhibitors.*

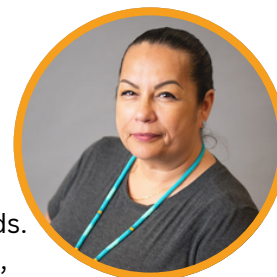


## STAFF UPDATES

### Leona Quewezance, Visionary Director of Indigenous Practices

Aaniin CAAN Membership and Alliances

It is a beautiful and meaningful time of year when we witness Mother Earth awaken with vibrant colours, longer days, and the return of warm winds. With each new season, we are reminded of the teachings of growth, renewal, and connection. It is truly a pleasure to reconnect with you once again.



Since our last newsletter, we are pleased to share some exciting updates from CAAN Communities, Alliances & Networks (CAAN). Our Warrior Societies continue to grow in strength and representation. We currently have fourteen of the twenty-one seats filled with passionate and committed members. Many of these Warriors have already stepped forward to share their knowledge and lived experiences by participating in CAAN committees, helping to guide our work with purpose and heart. It is a true honour to work alongside such a powerful group of individuals who are dedicated to giving back and creating positive change at a national level. We are confident the remaining seven seats will be filled shortly as our circles continue to expand.

For many communities, this season brings with it a time of ceremony, renewal, and healing. At CAAN, we have been busy preparing for upcoming events and focusing on building and strengthening our membership, a vital foundation of our work. As we move into the summer months, we are pleased to announce that we have made meaningful updates to our website, including improvements to the membership portal to make joining and staying connected easier than ever.

In honour of the changing season, CAAN will participate in a sunrise ceremony on the first day of summer. This sacred gathering reminds us to acknowledge all that the sun provides: light, warmth, and the energy that nurtures growth in all living beings.

We invite you to join our growing circle. If you are interested in becoming a CAAN member, please visit our website at [www.caan.ca](http://www.caan.ca) and register through the updated membership portal. If you are called to join one of the Warrior Societies and help lead through culture, experience, and heart, we welcome you to contact us directly at 1-306-332-0553.



## Angie Carriere, Research Project Coordinator - Infectious & Congenital Syphilis

### Wahkohtowin: Creating a National Syphilis Prevention Campaign Rooted in Indigenous Knowledge

Since April 2025, CAAN has launched the Wahkohtowin Project, a community-driven initiative focused on preventing syphilis among young Indigenous women across Canada. "Wahkohtowin" speaks to the sacred kinship we share with each other and the land, and that spirit is at the heart of this work.

We've partnered with **HIV Edmonton** and the **All Nations Hope Network** to co-create a land- and arts-based workshop series that honours Indigenous voices, culture, and creativity. Together, we are designing a national syphilis prevention campaign that is Indigenous-led, culturally grounded, and centred in ceremony and connection.



### Workshops

In the fall, we'll be hosting community workshops in Alberta and Saskatchewan. These gatherings will offer a warm, welcoming space for Indigenous women to come together and share knowledge through traditional and creative practices.

Each workshop will:

- Begin in a good way with smudging, ceremony, and guidance from Elders.
- Include hands-on activities using natural and cultural materials.
- Invite participants into sharing circles to reflect, learn, and support one another.

- Provide information on syphilis prevention, early testing, and care

These gatherings are guided by Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, and are meant to uplift the strengths and wisdom of each community we visit.

### Call for Participants

We are currently looking for **participants** to attend our Wahkohtowin workshops. If you or someone in your community is interested, please reach out to [angiec@caan.ca](mailto:angiec@caan.ca)





## Patrick Brownlee, Programs Manager

Hello CAANer's!!

Hope everyone is well and enjoying beautiful weather.

The beginning of the fiscal year started with ceremony and a Leadership Team meeting in the traditional lands of the Territory 4 Treaty, the original lands of the Cree, Saulteaux, Dakota, Nakota and Lakota First Nations and the homeland of the Metis. During this meeting, leadership discussed wapaneew akine, CAAN's strategic plan, implementing different areas to each leader's work plan.



Guiding our Spirits, CAAN's Gender Based Violence/Equity project met with the project Elder, Sedalia Fazio, in May of 2025. Elder Sedalia led us in a sweat at the beautiful Montreal Botanical Gardens before sitting down with us to discuss various projects. Program staff who were in attendance were grateful to spend time with Elder Sedalia and receive teachings and wisdom from her.

In Early June, CAAN's Harm Reduction project met on the unceded traditional territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh nations, now called Vancouver, BC, with our project partner, Dr Peter Centre. This meeting started out with teaching and ceremony from CAAN's Elder in-residence, Elder James Quatell, then progressed into an annual review of our work together and for future planning. This project has regular Community of Practice calls. Please watch CAAN's socials for more information.

CAAN will have a booth at the STI & HIV World Congress, where we will be sharing resources. If you are attending, please come check us out!

## Tash Dingwell, Promising Practices Coordinator for the Keeping Our Fires Project



With the new fiscal year beginning, I have continued to work collaboratively with the organizations that have participated in the project between 2024-2025 to complete our co-created resources on STBBIs. Three out of four resources in collaboration with the Battle River Treaty 6 Health Centre, the AIDS Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador, and Casey House are completed. You can find them available at CAAN's booth at the STI & HIV World Congress in Montreal, Quebec. They will be available on CAAN's website along with the co-created resources created with organizations between 2023-2024. By the end of the

Summer, we hope to have our illustrated story book, co-created with SafeLink Alberta, called ***Silent Waters: A Blackfoot Journey***, available.

In addition to completing this work, I am excited to be fostering new connections with new organizations that have recently joined the project. I look forward to seeing how we can use our knowledge and tools to strengthen their capacity to provide culturally safe and stigma-free STBBI services and co-create resources that are culturally grounded. Our training workshops with these new partners will take place on August 13 & 14, 2025. If you and your organization are interested in being a part of this opportunity, feel free to email me at [tashd@caan.ca](mailto:tashd@caan.ca).

I am also grateful to have begun the new fiscal year in a good and meaningful way, meeting with the programs team in Montreal, Quebec and Regina, Saskatchewan, back in May 2025, to revise our learned lessons and discuss our work plans. As well as attend a Sweat Lodge Ceremony led by Elder Sedalia L Fazio. Followed by our trip to Regina, Saskatchewan, to join ANHN's cultural camp, participating in their medicine walk. I am looking forward to the journey ahead!

## Sianna Bulman, Harm Reduction Coordinator

Taanishi,

Since April, significant progress has been made on the Canoe project. We have successfully completed the 2024 - 2025 Community of Practice (CoP) calls and training featuring Indigenous knowledge holders, community advocates, and allies. Planning for the 2025- 2026 calls, themes have been developed to guide each session, and outreach efforts have expanded through targeted promotion across CAAN's platforms. Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the importance of culturally grounded approaches in harm reduction. Work continues to secure future presenters and refine the integration of Indigenous perspectives throughout the remaining calls.



Maarsii,

Sianna Bulman



## Riley Desjarlais, Community Readiness Coordinator



Over the past few months, the Community Readiness project has been steadily building. In April, we travelled to Montreal for a Sweat Ceremony with Elder Sedilia, where the project received its spirit name, “We Help Them,” through a cloth and tobacco offering. We also met in Fort Qu’Appelle to gather materials for the upcoming STBBI conference and spent time at the All Nations Hope Culture Camp—harvesting red willow, joining a medicine walk by Echo Lake, and taking part in a water ceremony.

Since then, we’ve been continuing outreach with communities, confirming interest in the CR and Keeping Our Fires workshops, and editing the CR workbook. A call-out poster is in development to invite more communities to join the project.

Internally, we’re preparing for a virtual CR assessment with CAAN’s team, focused on TB. This will be treated like an external training, with an agenda and materials provided. We’re also working on an open webinar for HIV 101 and CAAN 101, with a registration system and certificates for participants. We plan to promote this session at our booth during the Montreal STBBI conference in July.

It’s been a meaningful few months of ceremony, connection, and preparation, with lots of exciting work ahead.



## Connor Reid, Mobilizing STBBI Research Project Coordinator

Since April, I've been steadily advancing the work of the Indigenous Mobilizing STBBI Research Project, including progress toward launching the Project Advisory Council (PAC). I'm now close to finalizing the date, location, and member list, which will mark a key milestone for the initiative.



Looking ahead, I'll be travelling to Montreal at the end of July to represent CAAN at the World STI and HIV Congress, and I also plan to visit the head office in person to assist with research file uploads, inventory reconciliation, and organizing project materials. In addition, I'll be supporting some new internal projects and assisting colleagues over the summer, which I'm very much looking forward to.

For National Indigenous Peoples Day and Indigenous History Month, I took time to reflect and reconnect spiritually with the work I'm doing, my ancestors, and the land. This month has been about mindfulness, letting go of what no longer serves me, and continuing to grow into the responsibilities I carry. I've been engaging in meaningful conversations, correcting misinformation when I hear it, and doing my part to change how people speak about and understand Indigenous Peoples—starting one conversation at a time.

It's been a period of both personal grounding and professional growth, and I'm excited for what's ahead.

## Jacqueline Bennett, Research Project Coordinator – Nîkânohtakewin



Nîkânohtakewin is a transformative youth-led initiative at CAAN that's centering Indigenous Youth voices in the prevention and early intervention of STBBIs. Since April, the team has submitted ethics proposals, formed a vibrant cross-Nation proposal writing group, and is now gearing up for a powerful one-day gathering in Calgary. This event will bring together Indigenous youth from across the Land known today as Canada to co-create a five-year research plan rooted in Indigenous Youth's knowledge, leadership, and lived experience.

## Tawnya Crowshoe, Indigenous Health Program Manager

This past month, the GLOWS Indigenous Health Grant was honoured to present at the Lowitja Institute's Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference in Adelaide, Australia. This year's theme honours the legacy of the late Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG, a trailblazing Yankunytjatjara woman and one of Australia's most respected Aboriginal leaders. The theme encourages participants to stand strong, be fearless, and work together for the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples.



The presentation highlighted how GLOWS Indigenous Health Grant: Guiding Local Opportunities for Wellbeing - centres Indigenous leadership, cultural knowledge, and relationship-based funding models to support community-driven responses to HIV and viral hepatitis.

It was deeply affirming to see the shared strengths and challenges between Indigenous communities in Canada and Australia. Despite facing funding limitations and structural barriers, both continue to lead powerful, culturally grounded health initiatives in their territories. The need for strong,



cross-national Indigenous partnerships were clear, especially those that uplift sovereignty, spirit-led practices, and sustainable systems change.

As we continue into the second year of GLOWS, we're excited to begin sharing more about the incredible work of our Year One grantees. Keep an eye out for upcoming social media spotlights and visual storytelling posts, featuring our grantees' voices, their community-based health initiatives, and the ceremony, culture, and creativity at the heart of this movement.

Follow along as we continue to grow this work together!

