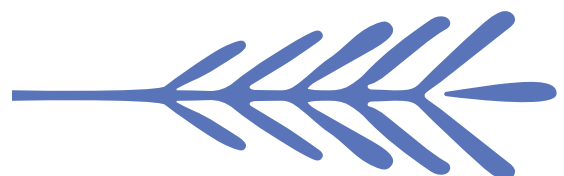




# Annual Report

Adaptation, Meaning & Connections

2020 / 2021



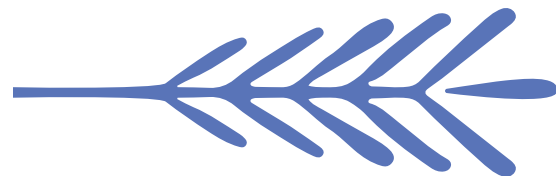
## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

This annual report is titled 'Adaptation, Meaning and Connections' to reflect the core functions of the work being done in our communities and within the support network at FPWC in the 2020/2021 fiscal year. In April 2020 FPWC, like so many others, believed that the pandemic would cause minimal disruptions in our work but as the world began to realize the impacts of the pandemic would be enormous it caused so many, including FPWC, to rethink how we would carry out our objectives in 2020-2021. Throughout this fiscal year FPWC has had to be responsive to the everchanging landscape brought on by the worldwide pandemic.

We have found creative ways to connect to our stakeholders by adapting our processes through the virtual world of 'Zoom' which allowed us to come together and identify the service and training needs for Mental Wellness and Crisis Support Teams to respond to the pandemic. We've used Zoom as a platform to become better acquainted with the teams, their experiences and to learn from each other. We've been fortunate to be let into the homes of those we work alongside to form relationships and to establish strong networks of support among the teams. We've used our time in this virtual world to create and share resources that will enhance the capabilities of the teams to provide meaningful support to those they serve. We have discovered that through the virtual world the workforce, communities and families found ways to be connected to the teachings, the land and Creation. These connections have given meaning and hope during this difficult and unusual time when we have all been stretched to consider how to support each other when we have been told to stay apart and to be socially distant.



Brenda M Restoule, Ph.D., C.Psych  
Chief Executive Officer



## SUPPORTING OUR STAKEHOLDERS DURING COVID-19

A major part of the work of the FPWC team in the 2020-2021 fiscal led us to consider how to support our stakeholders, Mental Wellness and Crisis Support Teams, during the pandemic. In some instances, FPWC identified new activities and initiatives to support the existing work of the workforce but we also had to find creative and different ways to support our stakeholders in navigating their way through the pandemic.

### Virtual Care Services During Covid

Recognizing the pandemic would make in-person support in communities a challenge, FPWC's primary response to supporting the MW/CS Teams during the pandemic was to ensure that the workforce would have the resources and tools needed to continue working with communities and their clients. FPWC worked quickly to secure a virtual platform, Cloud DX, that could be used by the workforce to reduce challenges with accessibility for their clients. The platform was chosen for its flexibility and accessibility and allowed for virtual appointment and chat options, was downloadable to tablets or phones for clients, and was accessible in northern communities through internet as well as satellite on preloaded tablets that the teams could loan.

# of User Accounts

74

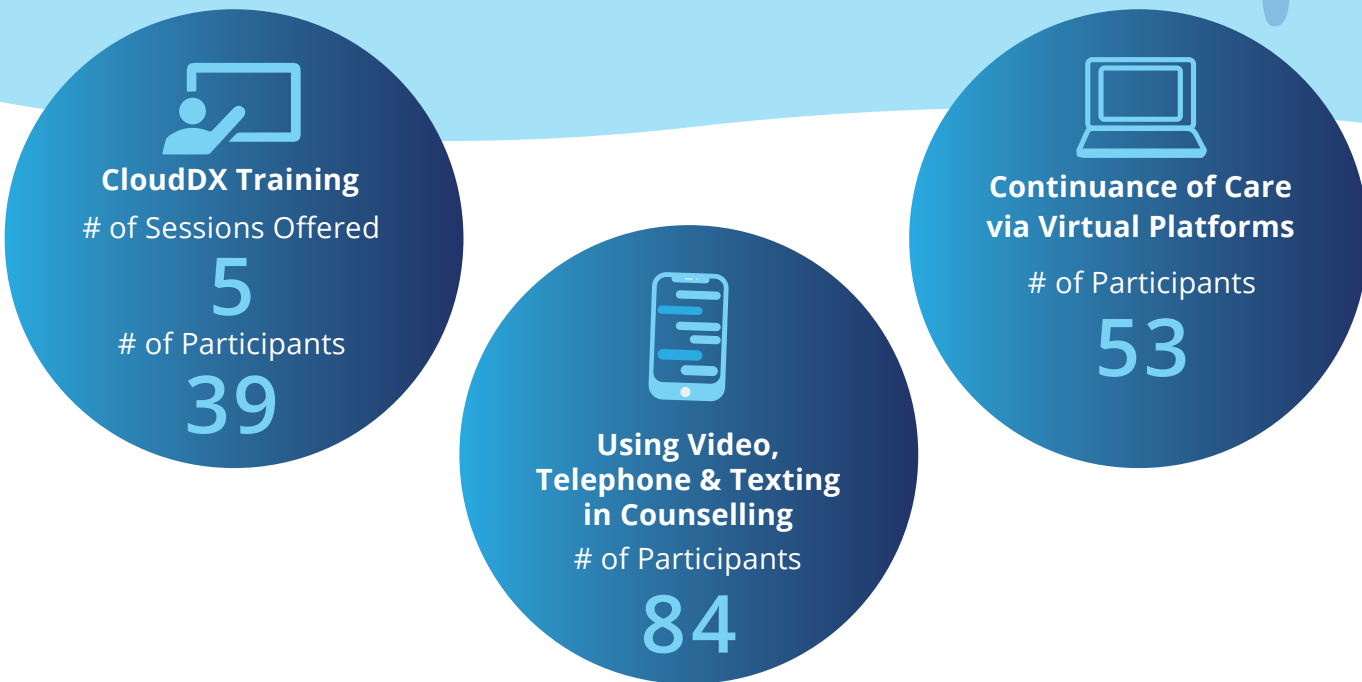
# of Tablets Used

0

# Active Users

11

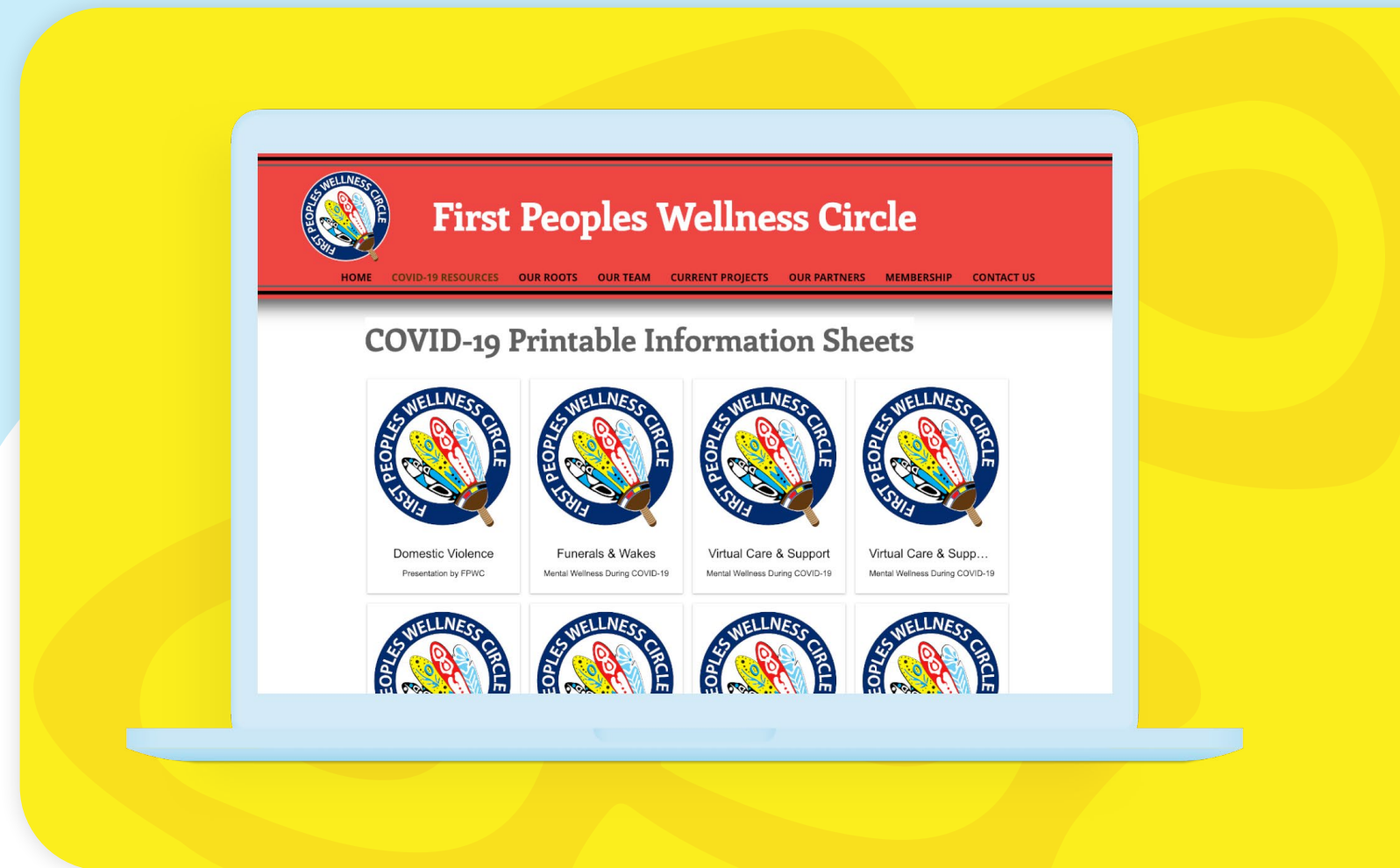
To assist teams in pivoting to this new way of working, orientation sessions were offered on the new platform about its many features, how to use it and how to support their clients in accessing the platform. To increase confidence in the use of virtual care, teams were offered training specific to ethics, privacy and security when offering client-based services virtually.



An assessment of use of the virtual platform was done in early 2021 and the data indicated modest uptake in use of Cloud DX by MW/CS Teams. However several other platforms and telecommunication options are currently being used by MW/CS teams for client support, staff meetings, in-service training, group work, workshops and community programs. Stakeholders recognize that virtual care platforms will continue to be a necessary tool post-pandemic particularly for reducing burnout and to ease the burden on teams associated with travel and being more responsive. Ongoing training needs related to the ethics of use of virtual care platforms and increasing confidence in use of technology will be critical needs for the teams in the coming year. To increase uptake, exploration of low barrier (i.e., ease of use, cost, technical support, etc) virtual care platforms will be vital to support teams to pivot securely and reliably. However, it is crucial that the infrastructure gaps related to connectivity in First Nation communities must be addressed to ensure First Nations have equitable access to care in their communities when they need it. FPWC will be focusing its efforts to increase the capacity of our stakeholders to provide effective, secure and timely responses

## Providing Culturally Relevant Information During Covid

When the pandemic started in March 2020, FPWC heard from its stakeholders they had a need for accurate and culturally relevant information to assist them with coping and managing the challenges they were experiencing. Although there was a lot of information available on the web there was limited information that was relevant to First Nations and FPWC responded by producing bilingual information sheets on wellness for elders, families, parents, health providers and community; adapting to virtual care and support; funerals and wakes; and domestic violence. These information sheets can be found on our website by clicking the following link: <https://www.fpwc.ca/covis-19-resources>. Links were also offered to reputable sites with more culturally relevant information pertaining to understanding and managing issues during the pandemic. Details contained in our information sheets were shared with Kids Help Phone to provide culturally relevant information for children, youth and their families to cope during the pandemic.





Our stakeholders required a space to come together to discuss how to provide a pandemic response and FPWC offered weekly/biweekly support calls titled *Promoting Wellness & Providing Support During COVID-19* with the following objectives:

- identify needs, tools and resources that are needed by MW/CS Teams to adequately respond during the pandemic;
- share culturally relevant information on providing support during the pandemic;
- highlight promising team and community approaches to supporting wellness;
- network with other wellness workers in First Nation communities and urban centers;
- provide support to the wellness workforce;
- identify possible training needs and advocacy efforts to increase efficacy of the workforce.

Number of Support Calls



23

Number of Participants



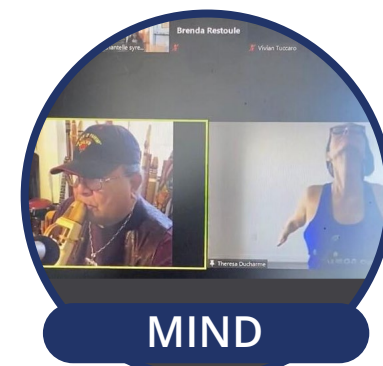
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Below are some of the shared discussion topics during the *Promoting Wellness & Providing Support During COVID-19* virtual gatherings:

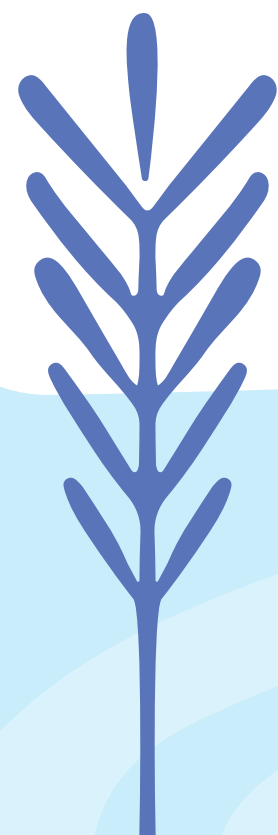
- Life Promotion
- Addressing Stigma in our Communities
- Mental Wellness Checks
- Birth During COVID
- Harm Reduction
- Land Based Healing during COVID
- Domestic Violence
- Grief & Loss
- Importance of Self Care for Frontline Workers
- Supporting Elders, Children, Parents & Community
- Funerals, Wakes & Ceremonies during COVID

Over the course of time FPWC began to notice that these support calls were being shared within the wellness workforce that extended beyond MW/CS Teams to those serving urban populations thereby extending the workforce network.

The support calls were replaced in 2021 with 2 virtual gathering learning series that were based on the identified needs of our stakeholders during our support calls. The first was a Self-Care Series focusing on worker wellness. This series included 5 virtual gatherings with interactive workshops and was developed specifically for our Mental Wellness & Crisis Response Team members. Participants learned and developed skills to promote self care and achieve a Mind, Body, Spirit and Emotion wellbeing balance.



48 PARTICIPANTS



The second learning series was a three day virtual gathering, *Connecting to our Traditional Knowledge to Support Wellness*. This series started with a Language Revitalization Panel, our guests joined us from across the country, representing one of the four directions. They shared their knowledge of the role language revitalization has in supporting mental wellness for individuals, families and communities, strategies that can support language revitalization and the importance language has in creating Hope, Belonging, Meaning & Purpose.



The learning series then continued with teachings from the four elements; **FIRE, AIR, WATER & LAND.**



## COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORTS FOR MENTAL WELLNESS TEAM

Creating an infrastructure for MW/CS Teams FPWC identified that most regions had an existing advisory structure in place so FPWC has worked with these regions to learn about their needs and strengths. There are currently 6 regions that have a Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) or similar structure in place. FPWC will continue to work with the remaining regions to create RACs that can guide the work of the FPWC.

It will be important to have a current database of the MW/CS Teams that is continually updated with relevant details of the teams such as number of members, region and First Nation being supported and expertise held by the team for example. FPWC is completing an accessible database using collected information gathered through our encounters with the teams during the past fiscal year. The final database will be guided by procedures that will ensure it is effectively and efficiently managed for use by the teams and other stakeholders.

### Building Capacity Of The Workforce

During the pandemic FPWC has had to shift how it has provided training to our stakeholders. Training has been offered on a national level using virtual means. In doing so FPWC has noted some benefits to national virtual training.

#### These include:

- cost savings for teams and FPWC who can offer more training
- accessible training
- multiple training dates allowing for more members to be trained
- recorded trainings allowing participants to review and increase their knowledge and skills
- sharing of best practices and networking opportunities across regions

This series was very well received and participants were eager to share their feedback:

"This was incredible. Thank you so much for everything that you do, highlight of last week for suuuure!"  
*Joe P.*

**64**  
PARTICIPANTS

"I have to say, in the last while I've been taking part in a ton of Traditional gatherings online, and I felt more engaged with this gathering than most others."  
*Brandon P.*

"I really enjoyed the sessions and I think more traditional series would be great."  
*Anonymous*

"It was a wonderful, informative three days. I loved everything!"  
*Melissa R.*



During this fiscal year FPWC offered 2 Community Engagement pilot trainings with a total of 30 participants. Feedback from these pilot sessions were used to refine the training and will be offered as an ongoing training opportunity.

FPWC created a number of training and/or resources to increase the efficacy of the teams during this fiscal, as noted below.



**Partnership and Collaboration:** training curriculum was finalized in 2020/2021 and anticipated to be piloted in the new fiscal year.



**Mental Wellness Team Toolkit:** This easy to use resource will be responsive to the the context, development and structure of the team and will provide a collection of resources to assist teams with start up and ongoing development and host many links from a variety of sources that will support the ongoing development of the team's capacity. This toolkit will be accessible to all teams through the FPWC Knowledge and Resource Sharing platform.



**First Nation Mental Wellness Resource Guide:** this resource will support teams to provide education to their partners about the realities of First Nation mental wellness and will include details specific to their region.

## TRAINING

Title of Training	Training or TTT	# of Participants
Workplace, Decision and Pandemic Fatigue	Training	32
Vicarious Trauma, Compassion Fatigue & Burnout	Training	39
Using Video, Texting and Telephone in Counselling	Training	84
Community Engagement	Training	29
Culture as Foundation	Training	49
Pharmacology	Training	60
Buffalo Riders	Train-the-Trainer	15
Community Crisis Response	Train-the-Trainer	18
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7 Trainings 2 TTT</b>	<b>326</b>

# PARTNERSHIPS: ADVOCACY, SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

A key factor to providing support during the pandemic for FPWC has been the importance of partnerships. Over the course of the year we have worked alongside Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations to support communities and our stakeholders in managing the impacts of the pandemic.

The shared vision and mandate FPWC has with our partner Thunderbird Partnership Foundation (TPF), continues to propel us forward in advancing several dialogues and initiatives related to mental wellness in the past year.

## These include:

- We joined the *First Nation Health Managers Association (FNHMA)* to provide information and support grounded in cultural knowledge at *9 Townhalls*. We lent our support with FNHMA and other Indigenous led organizations to a Public Service Announcement (PSA) acknowledging the important contributions of the health workforce during the pandemic.
- FPWC is finalizing a second PSA campaign in partnership with TPF and FNHMA to address stigma experienced during the pandemic. Watch for a summer 2021 release on the *#soarabovestigma* campaign addressing stigma for mental health, substance use and COVID.
- Redesign of the Trauma Informed Care training into a train-the-trainer model to be launched in 2021/2022 fiscal by Thunderbird.



Our partnership with the Assembly of First Nations allowed us the opportunity to participate in a number of COVID related meetings that assisted us in getting quick and reliable access to information that could be shared with our stakeholders, contribute to the planning of supports and distribution of information to communities and our stakeholders and advocate for the needs of our stakeholders. Advocacy efforts with the Minister of Indigenous Services in Canada resulted in \$82.5 million in investments in mental health and wellness supports to help Indigenous communities adapt and expand mental wellness services, improving access and addressing growing demand, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A new partnership was formed between the Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement (CFHI), TPF and FPWC that was commemorated with a virtual signing in July 2020. This partnership has created increased dialogue and planning for mental wellness initiatives to benefit our stakeholders. Since this time, CFHI has amalgamated with another organization and was relaunched in early 2021 as Healthcare Excellence Canada (HEC). FPWC looks forward to a continued partnership with HEC.



In this past year FPWC witnessed the Feather Carriers training thrive and become an incorporated organization. We have formed a partnership with Feather Carriers Inc and are offering some administrative support to provide access to COVID specific funding received later in the fiscal year. In the new fiscal year we will be offering Feather Carriers training to our stakeholders to increase their skills and capacity.

## Research Partnerships to Support Resource Development

New research partnerships have been formed in the last year under the Network Environments Indigenous Health Research (NEIHR) with the Saskatchewan NEIHR, led by Dr. Caroline Tait, and the Ontario NEIHR, led by Dr. Suzanne Stewart. NEIHRs are intended to “...establish a national network of centres focused on capacity development, research and knowledge translation (KT) centred on Indigenous Peoples....[and] is intended to provide supportive research environments for Indigenous health research driven by, and grounded in, Indigenous communities in Canada.”

FPWC will engage in research to enhance the services of our stakeholders and improve wellbeing in the communities they serve. Under the Ontario NEIHR, FPWC has formed a partnership with Dr. Jeff Ansoloos of University of Toronto (UofT) and Dr. Renee Linklater of Centre for Addictions and Mental Health (CAMH) to explore indicators to addressing complex crisis response in First Nation communities, including defining culturally relevant suicide risk assessments and attending to burnout by the workforce. FPWC began some of this work early in 2020 by conducting a literature scan on complex crisis response in First Nation communities. It is anticipated that further collaborations for research and highlighting clinical practices with other Indigenous practitioners and researchers through both the Ontario and Saskatchewan NEIHRs will be explored further in the upcoming year.

FPWC has joined the Anishinabek Nation and Laurentian University as a mental wellness expert to support the design and development of culturally relevant dementia assessment tool. We are currently supporting the rollout of First Nation community training on dementia.

## Working to Support First Nation Mental Wellness

Continuing the work of ensuring mental wellness for First Nations peoples is built on a strong foundation of First Nation culture and knowledge, as outlined in the First Nation Mental Wellness Continuum Framework (Framework), remains an integral part of the core activities of FPWC. We continue to work with the Implementation Team and our partners to bring about systemic changes and see ongoing investments in mental wellness, especially during the pandemic.

### In 2020/2021 FPWC continued to lead or support implementation work related to:

- addressing needs during the pandemic related to worker wellness
- fostering partnership with Indigenous youth led organizations
- design of an evaluation model for the Framework
- support the development of a manual for communities to address sexual abuse through restorative justice healing practices
- advocate for equitable funding for Indigenous organizations to create a systems shift in the equity of mental wellness services to First Nations
- participate in national discussions on racism in healthcare and highlighted how the Framework can attend to inequity
- highlight key tenets of the Framework in child and youth mental health promotion research supported by the Public Health Agency of Canada



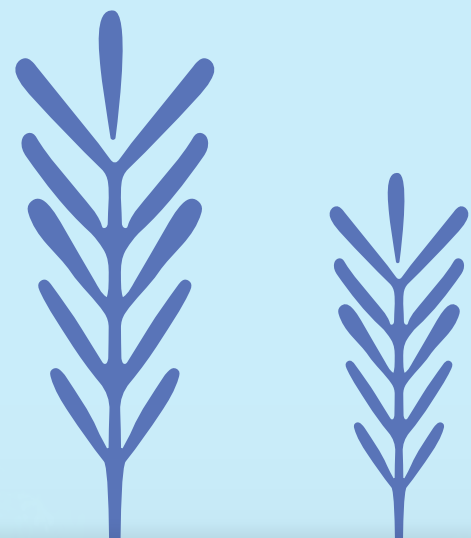




## The Importance of the IRS Program: Stories from IRS Survivors

FPWC embarked on a qualitative assessment of the Indian Residential School (IRS) Resolution Health Support Program (RHSP) by engaging survivors to understand how the program supported their healing. Using Indigenous research methodologies the IRS workforce has guided, directed and supported this work from the design of the methodology through to identifying and supporting participants. The rich data gathered to date provides some insight into the ongoing and growing need for this valuable program that supports healing from trauma for survivors, their families and the communities. A final report is due in 2021 but preliminary insights reveal the following:

- The program must grow and evolve to meet continued needs
- Supporting survivors with current and urgent needs
- Creating a life course approach within RHSP
- Building a quality care system in collaboration with RHSP
- Need to expand culturally based services
- Expanding the culturally safe workforce
- Caring for carers: Support for the RHSP workforce



## Caring for Child & Youth Mental Wellness

As part of our research partnership with Wikwemikoong Unceded First Nation and Laurentian University on the Aaniish Naa Gegii: The Children's Health and Wellbeing Measure, a number of child and youth mental wellness resources were developed in response to the pandemic. These measures can be found at [www.achwm.ca](http://www.achwm.ca)

FPWC continues to work with School Mental Health Ontario to support Indigenous student mental health and have embarked on a new project that will explore and identify the resources and tools needed to support Indigenous children and youth in schools. A proposal will be developed with input from stakeholders that will be delivered to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (Ontario) for possible investment in implementation.

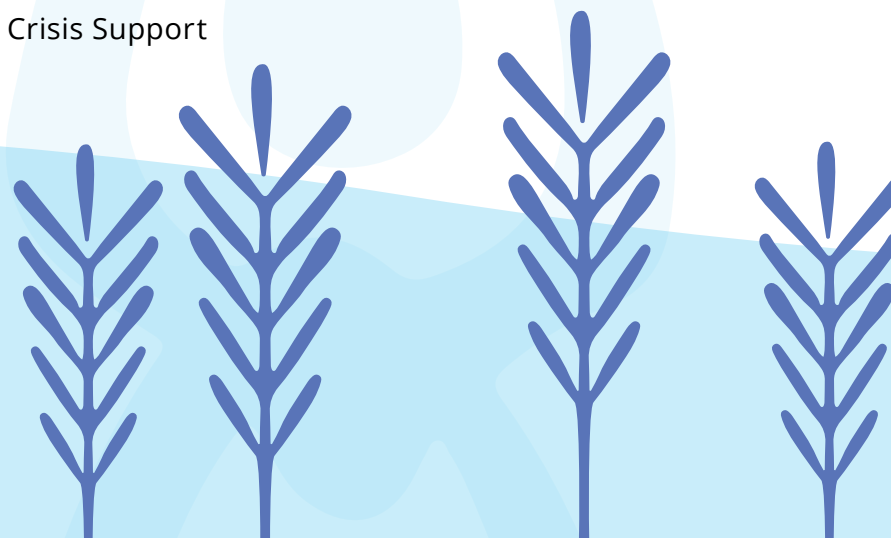
## CONFERENCES & COMMITTEES

### Working Groups

- Co-chair of the First Nation Mental Wellness Continuum Framework Implementation Team
- Elder to the First Nation Mental Wellness Continuum Framework Implementation Team
- Member co-chair of the Assembly of First Nations Mental Wellness Committee
- Co-chair of the Mental Wellness Task Force for Rural, Remote and Isolated Northern Communities
- Co-chair and secretariat for the IRS RHSP Project
- Co-chair and secretariat for the Indigenous School Mental Health Ontario Project
- Guidance group member and coaches for Promote Life Together Collaborative with Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement
- Leadership team member for the Knowledge Development and Exchange Hub of the Mental Health Innovation Fund projects
- Research community partner with Ontario and Saskatchewan NEIHR
- Research community partner with University of Toronto and Centre for Addictions and Mental Health
- Research partner with Wikwemikong Unceded First Nation and Laurentian University
- Research partner with Anishinabek Nation and Laurentian University
- Working group member for Assembly of First Nation Pandemic Response and Recovery Response Planning
- Working group member for the Ontario Mental Health and Addictions Pandemic Response table
- Working group member for the Canada School Mental Health Leadership Network
- Working group member for the Indigenous Services Canada Youth E-Health Project
- Working group member for the Ontario Structured Psychotherapy for Substance Misuse table

## Invited Speaker

- First Nation Health Managers COVID Townhall (2020 - March 25, April 2, April 9, April 30, May 21, June 18, October 22, 2021 - January 14, March 25)
- Defeat Depression. Presentation on supporting mental wellness through a First Nation lens during COVID
- Shingwauk Kinooomaage Gamig - Student Series Part 1. Creating Hope, Belonging, Meaning and Purpose: What Cultural Knowledge Tells Us
- Shingwauk Kinooomaage Gamig - Student Series Part 2. Coping with Stress and Anxiety During a Pandemic
- Shingwauk Kinooomaage Gamig - Student Series Part 3. Why do I feel exhausted all the time? How the Pandemic can make you feel depressed.
- Anishinabek Nation. Mental Wellness of the Workforce & Health Workforce (x2)
- CBC Radio Interview. Two Eyed Seeing and mental health promotion.
- Nipissing District Social Services Administration Board. Cultural Safety training (x2)
- Indigenous Services Canada Minister's Meeting. Presentation on areas for investment during COVID.
- Atlantic Summer Institute. Transformative change through the lens of a two-eyed seeing approach and A Dialogue with Elder Albert Marshall. (keynote)
- Ontario Society of Adlerian Psychology. Reconnecting to First Nation teachings to create hope, belonging and purpose. (keynote)
- Nijjaansinaanik Child and Family Services. Carrying a sacred responsibility: Child and Family Restoration. (keynote)
- House of Commons Senate Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs. Support for Indigenous Communities, Businesses, and Individuals Through a Second Wave of COVID-19 (Witness)
- Indigenous Health Conference. Designing Supports for Mental Wellness & Crisis Support Teams. (concurrent workshop)



## Invited Speaker

- Assembly of First Nations COVID Update table. Supporting mental wellness in First Nation communities during COVID-19.
- Mental Health Promotion Fund Annual Conference. Indigenous perspectives on mental health promotion.
- Ministry of Education: Indigenous Branch - Southern/Northern First Nations Education Task Force. Reflections on student wellbeing during the pandemic (x2)
- Food, Environment, Health and Nutrition of First Nation Children & Youth (FENHCY) Research Project. Setting the Stage for Culturally Safe Research/Approaching Research in a good way.
- FENHCY Research Project. Supporting the wellbeing of First Nation children and youth in FENHCY.
- Anishinabek Nation. Using cultural practices to support wellness (x2)
- Anishinabek Nation. Children and youth mental wellness.
- Anishinabek Nation. Supporting mental wellness in First Nation communities during COVID-19.
- Anishinabek Nation. Dementia and Mental Wellness in First Nation communities.
- Anishinabek Nation. Coping and maintaining wellness during the pandemic.
- Shkaabe Makwa workforce conference. Building hope through the lessons of our ancestors (keynote)
- Atlantic Policy Congress. Mental wellness and resiliency during times of crisis.
- Ontario First Nations Young Peoples Council Townhall. Coping and Support during the pandemic.



**857 Yellek Trail**

**North Bay, ON**

**P1B 8G5**

