

Status of Women Council of the NWT 2016 – 2019 Strategic Plan

November 2016



*Status of Women Council
of the NWT.*

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Strategic Plan covers the period from November 1st, 2016 to March 31, 2019. The Strategic Plan was developed in consultation with the Board of Directors and the staff of the Status of Women Council. The plan outlines seven strategic goals, which are enshrined in the legislation that established the Status of Women Council of the NWT (the Council), and which guide the work of the Council. The Strategic Plan will be reviewed yearly by the Board and staff.

2.0 BACKGROUND

In 1982, Government Leader George Braden appointed the first Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. In 1983, the *NWT Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act* was passed by the Legislative Assembly. In 1984, the first Advisory Council on the Status of Women was appointed. In 1986, the name was changed to the Women's Secretariat. In 1989, the Minister announced the government's intention to create a more independent Council, separate from the Women's Secretariat. In 1990, the present Status of Women Council of the Northwest Territories was created with the passage of the *Status of Women Council Act* by the Legislative Assembly of the NWT.

Members of the Board of Directors are appointed by the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. The number of members has ranged from five to nine persons and today consists of six (6) individuals representing the Beaufort-Delta, South Slave, Sahtu, North Slave, Deh Cho, and Tlicho Regions. Board Members have the opportunity to meet with Council staff twice a year.

The Council office in Yellowknife has a full time staff of three: the Executive Director, the Manager, Programs & Research, and a Community Development Coordinator. The position of Office Manager was phased out due to lack of funding increases during the period of the previous Strategic Plan for 2010 - 2015.

The Council has a video and resource library, and provides community outreach throughout the NWT via the Community Development Coordinator position.

3.0 MANDATE

The mandate of the Council is to work towards the equality of women through

- Advocating on behalf of women
- Public Education
- Research
- Advice to the Government of the NWT
- Assistance to women's groups and other groups working on issues of concern to women

4.0 VISION

The Vision of the Status of Women Council of the NWT is for:

- equality for women in all areas of life
- economic equality
- communities, workplaces and families free from violence against women
- a society which respects and includes the diverse experiences and perspectives of all women.

5.0 MISSION

The Council is dedicated to achieving equality for all NWT women through:

- public education and awareness
- research
- advocacy
- community development
- interagency cooperation
- advice to government, and
- identification and development of opportunities for women.

6.0 PRINCIPLES

The following principles guide the work of the Status of Women Council of the NWT:

- treat everyone with dignity and respect
- act with integrity
- promote equality
- promote continual dialogue with all northern women
- engage with people at the community level
- maintain confidentiality
- maintain a Zero Tolerance policy for violence against staff and Board members.

7.0 ASSESSING THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

The external and internal environments operating within and around the Council impact on the Council's ability to fulfill its mandate and to achieve its Mission, Vision, and Goals. Therefore it is important to have an understanding of the current internal and external factors that can impact this work.

External Environment

- Participation in the Wellness/Health Fairs, organized and funded by the Department of Health and Social Services, GNWT, provide the opportunity to connect with women in the communities.
- Good working relationships with other women's centred organizations such as the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), the Yellowknife Women's Society, and the Native Women's Association of the NWT.
- Strong partnerships with organizations such as Community Justice and Policing, GNWT; the federal Department of Justice, the Union of Northern Workers, and the Public Service Alliance of Canada.
- Funding sources outside of government e.g. Indigenous Affairs are possibilities to enhance the decreased budget

- Multi-year funding is available for some projects, but not for all projects, which impacts sustainability.
- Opportunities to provide information about women's issues to the Legislative Assembly via the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.
- Communication technology such as social media, and internet access in the communities enhances communication opportunities.
- Misconceptions about the Council, its purpose and work can weaken the organization.
- Competition and division between women and women's groups can undermine the focus on women's issues.
- Core funding needs to increase to maintain four positions and cover the now defunct Officer Manager position.
- The Act governing the Council will be revised and could alter positioning of the Council when addressing issues affecting women..
- Operating and travel costs have increased, without a corresponding operating budget increase, which impacts the ability to travel to the communities to conduct the work of the Council.
- There exists an environment where women's issues are undervalued and at the same time the number of men's activists groups is increasing.
- Opportunities exist to promote women in leadership roles within Aboriginal Governments
- Better communication at is needed at all levels

Internal Environment

- Committed, stable staff
- Strong Mission and Vision statements
- Board face to face meetings are held twice a year.
- Board members are appointed and ensure regional representation

- The Council is recognized through the Act
- Collaboration with other women's groups is strengthening
- Positive reputation, credibility and strong advocacy role
- Core funding has not increased resulting in the elimination of the Office Manager position. Although core funding has not seen significant increases the fact that there is core funding is positive.
- Audits are perfect indicating that the financial role, now assumed by the Executive Director, is done well.
- Due to funding cuts the Council office is not always accessible to the public during work hours and the telephone is not always answered.
- Unable to achieve Charitable Status due to strong advocacy role which limits possible outside donations and fundraising.
- The Council does not have a Communication Strategy or an Evaluation Strategy.
- The work of the Council is strong but promotion of the Council itself as the leading organization in the NWT for women's issues is weak.
- Board members are limited in their ability to meet with women in their regions due to lack of funding.
- Major events such as the Wise Women's Awards, Family Violence Awareness Week, Sisters in Spirit, and the December 6th Vigil are working well in the communities and Yellowknife.
- The Coalition Against Family Violence is a strong collaboration in Yellowknife.
- Timing of major events often conflicts with events happening in the communities, e.g. community politics, hunting, fishing, which impacts participation by community members.
- Interagency and partnerships are not always strong at the community level and there are fewer opportunities for partnerships.
- The promotion of the Council in the communities is weak and it is difficult to attract new people to support the work of the Council.

8.0 GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

As legislated by the Act the Council has the following strategic goals:

- To develop public awareness of issues affecting the status of women.
- To promote a change in attitudes within the community in order that women may enjoy equality of opportunity.
- To encourage discussion and expression of opinion by residents of the NWT on issues affecting the status of women.
- To advise the Minister on issues that the Minister may refer to the Council.
- To review policies and legislation affecting women and to report its findings to the relevant government department or agencies.
- To provide assistance to the Minister in promoting changes to ensure the attainment of equality of women.
- To provide the appropriate assistance to organizations and groups whose objectives promote the equality of women.

The objectives which support each goal and the actions which support each objective are provided below. Refer to Appendix I for the goals, objectives and actions in a table format.

Goal #1: Develop public awareness of issues affecting the status of women

Objective #1: Increase awareness of women's issues

Actions:

- Chair Coalition Against Violence
- Coordinate Family Violence Awareness Week
- Public recognition of other days of significance to women

Objective #2: Raise the profile of the Status of Women Council

Actions:

- Develop and implement tracking tools to record public engagement.
- Develop process for Board of Directors to promote the Council in the communities.

Objective #3: Enhance communication with all stakeholders

Actions:

- Develop and implement a Communication Strategy
- Develop Communication Plans for all public awareness initiatives

Goal #2: Promote a change in attitudes within the community in order that women may enjoy equality of opportunity.

Objective#1: Increase awareness of issues affecting women in the NWT

Actions:

- Research issues that affect equity and equality for women in the NWT
- Organize training initiatives
- Develop, disseminate and evaluate educational materials as identified

Objective#2: Champion women in leadership roles

Actions:

- Advocate and lobby for women's equality
- Participate in election forums including at the community level

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**Goal #3: Encourage discussion and expression of opinion by residents of the NWT on issues affecting the status of women.**

**Objective#1: Engage all communities and residents to raise awareness of issues and promote feedback**

Actions:

- Research best practices for community engagement
- Prepare position papers for discussion
- Develop a Community Engagement Strategy to invite residents of the NWT to discuss and express their views on issues

**Objective#2: Raise awareness of the priorities of the Council**

Actions:

- Make submissions and position papers available on the Status of Women website

**Goal #4: Advise the Minister on issues that the Minister may refer to the Council for consideration.**

**Objective #1: Respond to requests from the Minister in an efficient and expedient manner**

Actions:

- Confirm a protocol to follow for responses

**Objective #2: Review legislation governing the Council**

Actions:

- Make recommendations to the Minister regarding the Status of Women Act

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Goal #5: Review policies and legislation affecting women and to report findings to the relevant government departments and agencies.

Objective #1: Improve policies and legislation affecting women

Actions:

- Respond to Calls for Submissions
- Analyze existing policies and report findings

Objective #2: Identify issues and provide input on policy development

Actions:

- Make recommendations to the Minister as requested on development of new policies affecting women
- Improve access to the members of the Legislative Assembly

Goal #6: Provide assistance to the Minister in promoting changes to ensure the attainment of equality of women.

Objective #1: Improve communication between the Status of Women Council and the Minister

Actions:

- Clarify roles of the Senior Advisor, the Council and the Minister
- Include the Ministers office as a key stakeholder in the Communication Strategy

Objective #2: Be a catalyst for change

Actions:

- Determine ways and means of lobbying other Ministers who have portfolios pertaining to issues affecting women

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**Goal #7: Provide assistance to organizations and groups whose objectives promote the equality of women.**

**Objective #1: Support organizations and groups whose work promotes the equality of women**

Actions:

- Collaborate about training initiatives addressing common issues
- Determine ways in which assistance can be provided

**Objective #2: Promote the mandate and priorities of the Council**

Actions:

- Participate on committees of organizations and groups who promote the equality of women

## **9.0 SETTING PRIORITIES FOR 2016 - 2019**

The priorities for the Status of Women Council for women and girls for 2016-2019 are:

- Address systemic barriers that affect equity and equality
- Reduce Family Violence through prevention, emergency response and healing
- Reduce Gender Based Violence through awareness, attitude change and prevention
- Champion women in political and community leadership
- Promote advocacy and awareness of women's health in body, mind and spirit
- Increase awareness of the Status of Women Council's territorial mandate through transparency, communication and partnership